



## Cairngorms National Park Junior Ranger Project

The Cairngorms National Park Junior Ranger Project was launched in June 2009 involving 21 young people aged 12-15 in two 5 day programmes - one in Deeside and one in Strathspey. The project helps meet Cairngorms National Park Priorities for Action to:

- Develop a programme of practical volunteering opportunities that link people to the special qualities of the Park.
- Develop a programme of activity to encourage people to become ambassadors for the Park, promoting messages about care, active enjoyment and wise use.

The project also links in with EUROPARC Federation, a pan-European association of protected landscape areas. Its aims for young people are to:

- Create a network of youngsters who participate in nature protection by acting as advocates for their protected area.
- Improve youngsters' knowledge and understanding of the Ranger profession.
- Raise awareness about the natural, cultural, social and economic values of protected areas.

*'This is a tremendous opportunity for our young people to become actively involved in their local heritage and environment..'*

Moira Milne, Head Teacher, Alford Academy.

The John Muir Discovery Award formed the foundation of the 5 day programme. Activities were developed around the four challenge framework of Discover, Explore Conserve and Share. This approach helped to lend consistency to a wide range of experiences delivered in different places and by eight different Countryside Ranger Services.



### Activity

The programme took biodiversity, outdoor access and visitor management as its themes and activities were set up to fully explore these in the context of the Cairngorms National Park. Insh Marshes National Nature Reserve, Cairngorm Mountain and the River Spey were the wild places

visited by the Strathspey Junior Rangers. Activities included moth recording, pond dipping, footpath maintenance and first hand experiences of outdoor access issues whilst canoeing down the River Spey. An added bonus for two of the Junior Rangers was to walk up Cairngorm with Ben Fogle for a future BBC 'Country Tracks' programme and share their experiences with him.

*'I never knew there was so much to see in the National Park!'*

Junior Ranger Participant



Over on 'the other side of the hill', Burn o' Vat, Mar Lodge Estate, Loch Muick and the mighty River Dee formed the backdrop for activity. The Deeside Junior Rangers worked hard digging out drainage ditches and marking deer fences with canes to help avoid bird strikes from black grouse, as well as exploring the beautiful pinewoods of Glen Quoich. They met ghillies from Glen Tanar Estate whilst canoeing on the River Dee to discuss outdoor access issues around salmon fishing.



Both programmes ended with presentations to friends, family, Countryside Rangers, school staff and officers from Cairngorms National Park Authority about their experiences during the week and what they had learned about the Cairngorms and John Muir, the founder of the National Parks.

*'Normally we can't get a word out of him about what he's been doing, this week he hasn't stopped talking!'*

Junior Ranger parent.



The Junior Ranger Project has been a great success and further developments are taking place to allow more young people to get involved in the Cairngorms National Park and contribute to its aim of creating a world class national park.

The 5 day programme is to be extended into other areas of the Cairngorms National Park during 2010 and a follow on programme has been created for those who have completed the 5 day programme and want to stay involved. One day a month has been programmed by all the Countryside Ranger Services for the Junior Rangers to take part in activities such as tree planting, bird ringing and path maintenance. Once again the John Muir Award is at the heart of this programme and participants will be working towards their Explorer Award.

Junior Rangers from Deeside have been involved at the Braemar Gathering, talking to the public about the 'Highland Tiger Project' which aims to help conserve the Scottish wildcat.



*I just wanted to thank you all very much for your sterling efforts at the CNPA tent at the Gathering. You all did a great job at meeting the public, handing them the wildcat postcard packs and explaining to them what the Cairngorms Wildcat Project is trying to do.*

*...By helping to boost the species' profile amongst so many members of the public, you've done something significant in the fight to save the Scottish wildcat from extinction. Nice one!*

Dr David Hetherington  
Wildcat Project Manager

*'I now realise and understand deeply the need for young people to be involved with nature and the environment.'*

Cairngorms National Park Junior Ranger.

[www.johnmuiraward.org](http://www.johnmuiraward.org)  
[www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)  
[www.europarc.org](http://www.europarc.org)