

# ROAMING RANGERS

Conserving,  
educating,  
enthralling

You'll know Rangers as some of the people who warmly welcome you and lead you in activities as you discover more about the spectacular Cairngorms National Park. There are 20 Rangers busy meeting the diverse needs of nature and people, so their work is astonishingly varied. Here, three Rangers tell you a little about their work.

**"Even the smallest conservation work I do is often part of a bigger biodiversity plan across the park, which makes it all much more effective."**

Polly Freeman - Atholl Estates Ranger Service

"The Atholl Estate is a vast 148,000 acres and I'm the only Ranger, so joining the National Park two years ago has made a difference in loads of ways. All the Park Rangers share skills and carry out work strategically across the area, like our work to protect red squirrels or helping extremely rare and endangered plant species such as Small Cow Wheat. Already we have a new Visitor Centre in the village - a

partnership project - that opened at the end of last summer. Having this indoor space makes life easier for when I'm running events when the weather's wet. It's a focal point, and helps promote local businesses here - in fact the locals love it and use it a lot themselves too."

**"Our work with people with various special needs has been really quite productive and very fruitful."**

Eric Baird - Ranger at Glen Tanar Charitable Trust

"Part of the ethos of the charitable trust is to work with a wide range of people, including those with special physical and emotional needs. So much of what I do is with people

who might not otherwise get to enjoy being in the Cairngorms, like the WEA Reach Out group in Aberdeen - a drop in centre for long term unemployed people with associated issues. By bringing in workers like dry stone wallers, these people get to make their own mark on the landscape as part of the conservation work. Some have gone on to pursue Countryside Studies, which is great."

## Did you know?

- Unlike any other National Park in Britain, Cairngorms National Park rangers are a network of locally managed services, so they're community-driven. They're employed by several partners, and part-funded and supported by the Park Authority.
- Rangers encourage people to enjoy and learn about nature and heritage. They work extensively with people and groups to look after rare plants and animals. 1 in 4 of the UK's endangered species lives in the Cairngorms National Park.
- Over 250,000 visit Ranger bases in the Park each year, so we and partners have invested over £1.3 million in these centres in the past 10 years.
- 25,000 school pupils have spent time with a Ranger in the past 10 years.
- Rangers co-ordinate over 3,000 hours of volunteering in the Park each year - all people who want to give some time helping to conserve and promote nature.

**"Golden Eagles - strong enough to carry branches as big as a man's arm, yet so vulnerable."**

Duncan MacDonald - Highland Council Ranger Service

"Everyone knows that Ospreys are the National Park's big success story but not many people know that for Golden Eagles it's very different - they're still an endangered species even though there's plenty of prey like mountain hares, rabbits, ptarmigan and grouse in the east of the Highlands. Very sadly, it's because there's quite a high level of deliberate human persecution. That's why we track them via satellite tagging in the Park's Raptor

Track project. We attach very lightweight monitors to their backs so that they're traceable - we look where they disperse and we know when they are killed by poisoning or trapping, and their roosting spots are destroyed.

The first Golden Eagle we fitted with a satellite device, Alma, was poisoned just as she was entering her first year for breeding. Telling the children at Alvie Primary School in Kincaig, who had completely taken her into their hearts, was difficult - the school was devastated. But it was important to tell them as this is the reality. I've been working with the school and

they took Golden Eagles completely through their whole curriculum. Their fantastic project even involved P.E. with a Golden Eagle dance the children made up, music, and poetry and it was featured on the BBC's One Show! These kids will be the next generation of adults who live and possibly work in the area, and their passion is already influencing their local community, many of whom work in the National Park.

As Rangers, being supported by the Park Authority is very helpful - they are very good enablers for things we want to do such as biodiversity projects, and linking us up to other Rangers in different parts of the Park."

