

# SAFEGUARING SPECIES

**25%** of Britain's threatened wildlife lives here

Nowhere else in Britain offers you the chance to glimpse so many important and endangered species as the Cairngorms National Park. A massive 25% of the UK's threatened bird, animal and plant species live here – which is even more astonishing when you consider that the Park covers less than

## Fighting for survival

- Wildcat
- Golden eagle
- Capercaillie
- Pearl water mussel
- Pine hoverfly
- Water vole
- Red squirrel
- Twinflower

## The curse of the mink fur coat

American mink were imported and bred from the 1920s onwards for making fur coats, but many escaped or were released and have thrived by preying upon native species, bringing some to the edge of extinction. Water voles, a priority species on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, are so threatened they have disappeared from 97% of their sites. As soon as mink exhaust one supply of prey, they adapt and attack another: salmon and trout stocks; wading birds such as oystercatchers, divers, ducks and terns; red grouse and pheasant.

The key issue is that mink have no natural predators in Scotland; in the

wildlife. Five local sporting estates recently piloted Wildlife Estates Scotland, a national initiative of over 200 land and estate-based businesses. It aims to demonstrate that sporting estates are taking integrated approaches to stop and reverse the loss of biodiversity. The Cairngorms businesses are: Atholl Estates, Allargue Estate, Abernethy Estate, Crown Estate Glenlivet, Edinglassie Estate and Alvie Estate.

## Rich and varied habitat - a haven for wildlife

It's no surprise the Park provides ideal conditions for so many species when you consider the tremendous variety of habitats:

- arctic-character granite

**As many as 1,200 species in the National Park have been identified as important for nature conservation**

2% of the UK's landmass. Wildcats, golden eagles, capercaillie and the fresh water pearl mussel.... saving these species, while protecting others, is the focus of much of the Park's work: the purpose of the new partnership, Cairngorms Nature.

## Scottish Wildcats: rarer than tigers and under great threat

Also known as the 'Highland Tiger', these exceptional felines are close to extinction; fewer than 400 survive today. Complex issues surround saving the species and partnership work in the Cairngorms Wildcat Project has succeeded in raising awareness and hopefully turning the tide

in their favour. By working with land managers, vets and cat welfare groups, it adapted existing techniques and pioneered new, such as neutering feral cats. It was the first wildcat conservation work ever undertaken and was instrumental in the formation of today's Scottish Wildcat Conservation Action Group.

Since it started in May 2009 there have been 465 potential wildcat sightings within and outwith the Park; camera traps have also revealed previously unknown populations. Now, wildcats are in the public's top 3 most significant species; public donations fund extensive practical conservation in the Park.

US coyotes, wolves, bears, bobcats and otters control their numbers. Partnership project Scottish Mink works with home owners, land owners, local interest groups and river trusts to monitor and, under clear guidance, set humane traps to reduce their population, as part of sustainable management. The Park is one of the water voles' last strongholds; removing local mink is good news for water voles and biodiversity.

## Landowners working in harmony with nature

The mosaic of different habitats is partly the result of the work of generations of land managers, and their continuing efforts to sustain

mountainous landscape - the largest in Britain

- pure waters of straths and lochs threading through the landscape
- fine quality wetlands and lowlands
- extensive tracts of ancient woodlands with more than half of the surviving Caledonian forest.

This abundance underpins a working landscape where land use helps to shape nature, and where nature sustains land and tourism businesses. Given the Park's international importance, planning to counteract natural and human threats to species is essential for the continued conservation and enjoyment of this spectacular landscape.

