

Safeguard the Cairngorms: species under threat

The wild landscapes of the Cairngorms National Park include high mountains, ancient forests, rivers, lochs and moorlands. Over 50% of the Park is designated for natural heritage conservation. Alarmingly the Cairngorms National Park Authority is set to approve four proposed developments which we consider will cause a major adverse impact on protected habitats and species.

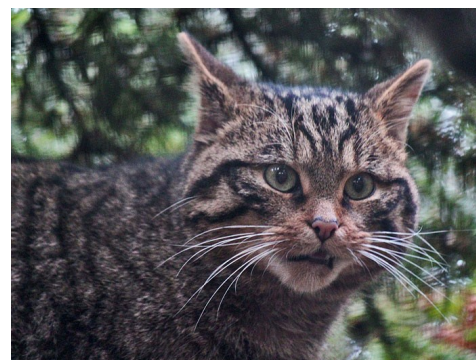
You can find out about some of the species affected by the developments below.

Scottish wildcat (*Felis silvestris grampia*)

Plans for new housing in the Cairngorms National Park could threaten the Scottish wildcat population as they are highly sensitive to disturbance from humans, traffic, loss of habitats and hybridisation with feral domestic cats.

The Scottish wildcat is a sub species of the European wildcat, having suffered serious declines it is now restricted to the Scottish Highlands. They look similar to a domestic cat, with black and brown markings and a distinct thick tail with black ringed bands and a blunt black tip. Nocturnal and solitary it forages mainly on rabbits at dawn and dusk.

The Scottish wildcat is identified as a species of conservation concern by the Nature Conservation Act (Scotland) and the Scottish Biodiversity List.



© BSCG

Violet oil beetle (*Meloe violaceus*)



© BSCG

The Violet oil beetle, found at An Camas Mor, is strongly dependent upon the long-term maintenance of flower-rich, semi-natural grasslands as it feeds on flowers and soft grasses. The development at An Camas Mor could impact significantly on this population due the large area of habitat loss. As Scotland is a species stronghold, conserving existing populations is important and they are listed as a species of conservation concern by the Nature Conservation Act (Scotland).

A large black beetle with a purple sheen, its louse-like young visit flowers to hitch a ride back to a solitary bee's nest. It then eats its food stores before emerging as an adult beetle.

Northern damselfly (*Coenagrion hastulatum*)

The Northern damselfly is restricted to a few small lochans (small inland lochs) in the Scottish Highlands. With such a small range the development at An Camas Mor would be a significant loss for this species.

Males are blue and black banded and the female is green if viewed from the side or black if viewed from above. As with all damselflies the life cycle involves a stage as an aquatic nymph before metamorphosis into a winged adult. The Northern damselfly is rare and is listed on the Red Data Book.



© BSCG

Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*)

The developments in the Cairngorms National Park would stop Cuckoos using this area. The Cuckoo is a UK red list species meaning it is of high conservation concern, globally it is declining and immediate actions is needed to conserve the species.

A dove sized grey coloured bird that has barred white under parts, a long tail and pointed wings, which feeds on insects, especially caterpillars. It has an interesting life cycle – being a brood parasite on smaller birds such as the reed warbler.



© Sergey Eliseev

Freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*)



© Joel Berglund

The River Spey supports a population of Freshwater pearl mussels of international importance. These species are sensitive to water quality and the new housing developments in the Cairngorms National Park could contribute to increased levels of domestic run-off and silt into the river water.

The Freshwater pearl mussel is a bivalve mollusc with two shells surrounding a soft body. The shells are a yellow-brown colour getting darker with age. The mussel can live for over 100 years, living as an adult in sandy or gravel river beds. Part of the life cycle is spent attached themselves to the gills of Salmon or Brown trout before maturing and embedding into the river bed.

The freshwater pearl mussel is considered endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list alongside the Giant Panda. It is in global decline and faces threats from poaching, pollution and overfishing.

Northern February red stonefly (*Brachyptera putata*)

The Northern February red stonefly is endemic to Scotland so it is found nowhere else in the world. The population in the River Spey could be threatened by the developments in the Cairngorms National Park due to its sensitivity to water quality. Increasing development adjacent to the Spey could lead to an increase in nutrient and sediment levels

The Northern February red stonefly is a grey coloured insect which needs fast-flowing, well oxygenated water to develop in. The majority of its life is spent as an aquatic nymph feeding on algae in the river. The stonefly is sensitive to water quality especially high nutrient levels that result in reduced oxygen content in the water. This species is identified as a species of conservation concern by the Nature Conservation Act (Scotland) and the Scottish Biodiversity List.



© Wildlife Photo Library 2002

© Mike Hammett

Red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*)



© BSCG

Scottish pinewoods are a vital stronghold for the Red squirrel in Britain and the developments sites in the Cairngorms National Park will result in the loss of woodland habitat with high numbers of red squirrel

The Red squirrel has red fur, a bushy tail and ear tufts in winter. Once widespread across Britain the range has drastically reduced. The Red squirrel is found in woodland where they feed primarily on pine seeds. They build tree nests called dreys which they usually line with moss. The Red squirrel is threatened by loss of habitat and disease carried by the non-native Grey squirrel.

The Red squirrel is one of our most endangered mammals, protected by the Nature Conservation Act (Scotland). Globally numbers are decreasing.

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

Lapwing are found on some of the farmland habitats at Kingussie. This red listed species has seen its breeding population halve in the last 25 years. The distribution of British lapwing is predominantly in the south of England making it a less common sight in the Scottish highlands.

The lapwing is a black and white wading bird which breeds on farmland feeding in areas rich in soil invertebrates. The Lapwing has been on the UK red list since 2008.



© BSCG

Pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)



© Hugh Clarke

The two species of Pipistrelle bat have suffered continuing population declines. A housing development here would mean some valuable feeding grounds would be lost for these bats.

The Pipistrelle bat is small and brown with a dark brown face. Its flight is fast and jerky, catching and feeding on insects in the air. It is known to frequent a variety of habitats including woodland, woodland edge and pasture.

All species of bats are legally protected.

Narrow-headed ant (*Formica exsecta*)

The Narrow-headed ant population at Carrbridge is of national significance. The development would destroy the Narrow-headed habitat in an area of the UK where the main strongholds are found.

The Narrow-headed ant is a rare, only found in the Scottish Caledonian pine of Speyside, in the Scottish highlands, and at one site in Devon. The ant is a sign of healthy woodland, and provides services such as dispersing seeds, preying on pest aphids and caterpillars.

The Narrow-headed ant is listed as Endangered on the UK Red Data Book and is protected under the Nature Conservation Act (Scotland) and Scottish Biodiversity List meaning action much be taken to conserve the species.



© BSCG

Scottish crossbill (*Loxia scotica*)



© Nigel Blake

The Scottish crossbill is endemic to Scotland – found nowhere else in the world. The development on the sites in the Cairngorms National Park would destroy some of the Caledonian pinewood that the Scottish crossbills and other crossbills use.

The Scottish crossbill is a chunky finch with a powerful crossed bill that enables it to extract seeds from tough pine cones. It lives on Scots pine trees, feeding on the pine seeds. It can be found in new and old Caledonian pinewood in Scotland.

The Scottish crossbill is on the UK amber list being a species of European concern.

Violet coral (*Clavaria zollingeri*)

The Violet coral is rare in the UK and Europe. Often found in nutrient poor grassland, a habitat generally in decline due to habitat loss and intensive agriculture. You can find it at the Carrbridge development site and it would be threatened by loss of the grassland habitat there.

The Violet coral is a delicate purple fungus with antler-like branches. It is a saprobic species, meaning it gets its nutrients from breaking down organic matter.



© Ern Emmet

Otter (*Lutra lutra*)



© Steven Falk

The development sites in the Cairngorms National Park may threaten the River Spey and habitats used by the Otter and Otter prey. Both are sensitive to disturbance and habitat loss on land and in water. Traffic, in particular, can be a significant cause of mortality for otters when they are active at night.

The Otter is a solitary, semi-aquatic mammal living in a holt around the waters edge. They are fast, agile swimmers preying mainly on fish that can be found in rivers, streams and lochans. The Otter is listed as near threatened on the IUCN red list.

Juniper (*Juniperus communis*)

The Juniper shrubs found in the Cairngorms National Park are some of the best examples of large, mature Juniper. The development sites would threaten this plant as the area is cleared to build upon.

Juniper is an evergreen shrub with blue-green needles and purple berries. It is an important understory shrub of Caledonian pinewoods. Although widespread across Europe and most of Scotland it's geographic range and colony size is declining in Britain and it is protected under the Nature Conservation Act (Scotland).



© BSCG



© BSCG

A mason bee (*Osmia uncinata*)

Osmia uncinata is a small mason bee confined to Strathspey which is known to use the abandoned tunnels of longhorn beetles and visit the flowers of bird's-foot trefoil. It is widespread but the populations are highly localised. The developments would threaten the Caledonian pine forest and forest edge habitat, which is this species' favoured habitat.

Osmia uncinata is listed as vulnerable on the Red Data Book and is protected under the Nature Conservation Act (Scotland).

Blaeberry bumblebee (*Bombus monticola*)

The Blaeberry bumblebee has suffered a decline in distribution and range. The developments in the Cairngorms National Park would destroy some of the Blaeberry (also known as Bilberry) plants to which the bee is closely associated.

The Blaeberry bumblebee has red hair on the abdomen and bright yellow bands on the thorax. It is found in highlands and moorlands especially those of upland altitudes above 300m and uses disused underground mammal nests to raise a small colony. It feeds on the pollen and nectar from Blaeberry, clover and bramble.



© S Falk

Safeguard the Cairngorms campaign has been established by four charities committed to protecting the natural and cultural heritage of the Cairngorms National Park for future generations. Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group (BSCG), Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust, The Cairngorms Campaign, The Scottish Campaign for National Parks.

www.buglife.org.uk

Tel: 01786 447 504



@buzz_dont_tweet

Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust, Balallan House, 24 Allan Park, Stirling, FK8 2QG

Buglife The Invertebrate Conservation Trust is a registered charity at Bug House, Ham Lane, Orton Waterville, Peterborough, PE2 5UU. Registered Charity No: 1092293, Scottish Charity No: SC040004, Company No: 4132695