

Cairngorms Connect

Highlights Report

1 October 2023 – 30 September 2024

The Cairngorms Connect Partnership has had another productive year, with marked progress across all areas from restoration delivery to communications and involvement, and science and monitoring. The scale of these achievements is a testament to the hard work across the whole Partnership by staff and volunteers.

The last 12 months have seen the reintroduction of Eurasian Beaver, after an absence of 400 years, and the release of European Wildcat into the Cairngorms Connect landscape.

This year saw some exciting engagement projects: the significant growth of Cairngorms Connect Venison resulted in the employment of a young local butcher to keep up with demand; the Cairngorms Connect Youth Cohort developed a much-needed resource about menstruating in the mountains; 500 people joined us at Hill to Grill 2023; 55 people attended the 2023 Community Conference; and the creation of the beautiful and inspiring 'Commonplace Book', to name a few.

Cairngorms Connect's Science programme continues to be highly regarded, and this year saw a substantial work programme in conjunction with the NERC funded Cambridge Centre for Landscape Regeneration.

The Cairngorms Connect Predator Project's Diversionary Feeding study was published by the Journal of Applied Ecology and other estates have picked up on our monitoring and testing interventions, adopting both in-forest cattle grazing and diversionary feeding.

We look forward to building on this work next year, developing our restoration practices and continuing to involve and collaborate with our local community.

- Cairngorms Connect Board



Supported by



Catriona Parmenter



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Lizzie Brotherston



James Stevens



Lizzie Brotherston



Mike Butler



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Sam McCreadie



Chiara Alagia



Forestry and Land Scotland



Lizzie Brotherston



Alexander Kennard



Maree Morrison



Lizzie Brotherston

Partnership Staff Highlights

"This year, we have seen a number of Beaver releases across Wildland Cairngorms. It's been fascinating to watch the reestablishment of this species, their engineering of habitats and successful breeding. Seeing these thriving reintroductions alongside the regenerating woodlands in the Cairngorms, has been a true highlight for me."
- Tara Meehan, Regeneration Coordinator, Wildland Limited

"The highlight for me this year is that we are now working with three local graziers and their 200 cattle to graze 2000 hectares on Abernethy Nature Reserve, all without a need for fencing. We are seeing shared benefits both for the pine forest habitat and for the graziers who can overwinter their cattle on our land - opening up new opportunities for them."
- Mike Butler, Assistant Warden, RSPB Scotland

"I have been working with local young people in a partnership project with Kingussie High School and NatureScot to collect local native tree seeds with a view to growing and planting them out into the forest. It has been brilliant to see the enthusiasm of these young people. Hopefully some of them will go on to become the foresters of the future, helping to restore native forests."
- Kevin Robertson, Forest Management Work Supervisor, Forestry and Land Scotland

"My more memorable highlights this year come from our Black Grouse surveys on Invereshie and Inshriach NNR. Early mornings, blizzards and bothy nights provided a backdrop for the work carried out in this small chunk of the landscape, helping me appreciate the amount of fieldwork required to monitor the Cairngorms Connect project area."
- Alexander Kennard, Reserve Officer, NatureScot



Sign up to the Cairngorms Connect newsletter for monthly updates and details of local events.

cairngormsconnect.org.uk

Cairngorms Connect Progress

Landscape-scale Restoration



308 ha
of Scots pine
plantation
restructured

2275 ha since 2019



355 ha
of peatland
restored

1539 ha since 2019



2428 ha
of non-native
conifers removed

8219 ha since 2019



59 ha
of flood-banks,
control structures,
canalised channels
and floodplain
plantation have
been removed

Science & Monitoring



1465 Moths
have been recorded
across 69 surveys

15,893 since 2019



10,149 Willows
walked in and planted
in and around the
Loch A'an basin

21,221 since 2019



5 pairs or families of
Beavers reintroduced
into CC landscape



28 Wildcats released
into CC landscape



1 paper published in Journal of Applied Ecology

Community Impact



300
printed period
resources produced
by the Cairngorms
Connect Youth
Cohort

Photo by Lizzie Brotherston



4141
people attended
an event, workshop,
or talk with
Cairngorms Connect

Photo by Catriona Parmenter



10 sessions
delivered for the
Cairngorms National
Park Junior Rangers
by Cairngorms
Connect

Photo by Pete Short



60+
staff employed
across the
partnership,
including 1 newly
hired Butcher

Photo by Lizzie Brotherston



1,650
hours of
volunteering
at the
Tree Nursery

Photo by David Balir



1830 kg of Cairngorms Connect Venison
made available through events, workshops,
and sales to local businesses.

Photo by Rupert Shanks



£702,114

Endangered Landscapes and Seascapes Programme
funding has been spent locally, including local salaries.

£2,875,132 since 2019