

# Nature in brief

## 12: Living Landscapes— Scottish Uplands



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**Scotland's uplands contain some of the largest expanses of semi-natural habitat in the UK, and hold hugely important stocks of natural capital.** These landscapes, typically 300-400m above sea level, have been shaped by climate, geology and centuries of human influence. Many of these habitats have, and continue to, suffer a decline in extent and deterioration in condition. Most notably heather moorland, peatlands and native woodlands.

**The main threats to Scotland's uplands** are: habitat fragmentation; grazing pressures; intensive grouse moor management; peatland drainage; spread of invasive non-native species; inappropriately located energy developments and large scale monocultural forestry plantations; poorly targeted public subsidies that fail to value ecosystem benefits and wildlife crime.

**Major shifts in land use policy and management and wider societal attitudes are required to restore Scotland's upland ecosystems in order to realise the full range of services and benefits.** These benefits include food and freshwater, climate and flood regulation, carbon stores, and recreation and tourism.

**The Trust has three wildlife reserves that contain significant areas of upland habitats:** Ben Mor Coigach, Rahoy Hills and Largiebaan. They cover a total area of over 9,000 ha and Ben Mor Coigach is part of the wider Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape, a community partnership. **These areas will be the focus of our own landscape-scale restoration activity over the next five years.**

**For further information please contact:**

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**What the Scottish Wildlife Trust would like to see:**

- **Integrated Land Management plans that secure sectoral cooperation to improve the condition, services and benefits from upland ecosystems.**
- **Reform of subsidy regimes for upland sheep and cattle farming to encourage low stocking densities and 'agro-forestry' systems.**
- **Financial incentives for low-impact forest management in commercial upland plantations**
- **Regulation of deer and upland grouse moor management to encourage more sustainable management practices**
- **Wildlife-rich networks in areas between protected sites that support natural dynamic processes and succession.**
- **Incorporation of Ecosystem Health Indicators (EHIs) and Natural Capital Valuations (NCVs) into all relevant policy instruments.**
- **New statutory guidelines to mitigate the impacts of energy developments.**
- **Re-introduction of lost species such as Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*) and Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*).**