

## NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

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### Two Trust sites sight wildcats

Wildcats have been spotted at two National Trust for Scotland sites in Aberdeenshire in recent months.

The charity which conserves and promotes Scotland's heritage has captured video footage of a 'good hybrid' exploring the ancient woodlands at Drum Castle from earlier in 2016.

And at Leith Hall, a cat which was first sighted by Scottish Wildcat Action project manager Roo Campbell several years ago, has been captured on camera. The images were taken on a nearby farm, and upon examination Roo confirmed that he had seen this cat several years ago while he was working in the Huntly area.

Roo said:

"I detected this cat on camera when I was doing an earlier project putting GPS collars on cats in 2013 - 2014. She was using Leith Hall and a local farm and was a regular visitor to the trail cameras I had placed there. I managed to get a collar on her and was able to look closely at how she used the area.

"I always hoped to see her again when we began the Scottish Wildcat Action project in the same area. Then we were sent some recent trail camera images from the farm and I realised it was the same cat! This caused me to double check some of the other images collected by Emma Rawling, our project officer in the area over the winter and true enough, it was the very same cat."

This cat was tested then and was found to have a strong genetic score of 75% – this means that while she has some domestic cat ancestry like most remaining wildcats, she has a relatively high proportion of wildcat ancestry.

Senior nature conservation advisor for the National Trust for Scotland, Richard Luxmoore said:

"It's great to be able to demonstrate that we have wildcats living on our properties in Aberdeenshire. We tend to associate this elusive beast with the wilder parts of the Highlands but some of our best evidence comes from the more populated agricultural land in the north-east. Some of our most important wildlife sites turn up where we least expect them."

The National Trust for Scotland is currently monitoring dozens of sites across the north of Scotland for signs of wildcat activity. The charity is also one of 20 organisations involved in Scottish Wildcat Action, a partnership project uniting experts from more than 20 key organisations. Its steering group comprises Scottish

Natural Heritage; Forestry Commission Scotland; Cairngorms National Park Authority; National Museums Scotland; Royal Zoological Society of Scotland; Scottish Gamekeepers Association; Scottish Wildlife Trust; The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies - Edinburgh University.

Scottish wildcats are one of the UK's most endangered species. And the wildcat work is one of the key projects in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy which aims to support the Scottish Government strategic objectives for a wealthier, fairer, healthier, smarter, greener, safer and stronger country.

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