

**NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## **Where to spot Scotland's best-loved and rarest wild animals**

Scotland is a haven for some of Europe's rarest animals, with our highlands, islands and coastlines serving as the perfect habitats for endangered and threatened species.

On March 3 the UN will shine a spotlight on those breeds and the challenges of a changing world and climate as they host their annual UN World Wildlife Day.

Through its work, caring for and protecting some of the country's most cherished wild spaces, the National Trust for Scotland provides sanctuary for rare and protected species.

The conservation charity's properties are also the perfect place to spot these animals, with miles of walking paths which crisscross deep woods, glens, hills and mountains and follow our riverbanks and burns.

The National Trust for Scotland's people – employees and volunteers - not only protect and monitor their properties but the wildlife that can be found there, in some cases working in partnership with volunteers and other charities.

Lockdown continues to impact on all of our travel plans and the Trust is urging people to observe safety measures and social distancing when visiting properties and remain mindful of travel restrictions.

As the first signs of Spring begin to emerge, so too will our favourite animals, some of whom have been tucked away for winter, hiding out in hibernation. As the weather improves and the days get longer, this is the perfect time to spot them.

As the National Trust for Scotland celebrates the UN's World Wildlife Day, we pick out the best locations to spot Scotland's favourite and rarest animals.

### **Crathes Castle, Drum Castle and Leith Hall, Aberdeenshire**

The Scottish Wildcat is one of the rarest and most elusive animals in the country. If you spot this one you have seen something truly special. Several areas in the Highlands have been identified as key habitats for the wildcat, which was once found across the UK but today only survives in Scotland. Three Trust properties, Crathes Castle, Drum Castle and Leith Hall in Aberdeenshire, are known for wildcat sightings. The cats are generally nocturnal or 'crepuscular' (which means that they are most active at dusk and dawn). But if you keep quiet you may spot them during the day.

### **Inverewe Garden**

This stunning garden in Wester Ross is a haven for wildlife and home to all of Scotland's 'Big Five', the golden eagle, red deer, red squirrel, harbour seal and otter. From sea to sky, there are treats to behold and you may even be lucky enough to make it a 'Big Six' with the majestic sea eagle also calling the area home. And there are earthly delights to be found at Inverewe, where you are surrounded by rare plants and extraordinary sights, among them towering giant redwood trees.

### **Pollok House**

Okay, so they don't really count as 'wildlife', but it would not be fair to miss out one of Scotland's most beloved animals – the Highland Cow. If you take a stroll down to Pollok House and wander through the surrounding public park you will see a herd of Highland cattle, chewing the cud and striking a pose for visitors. And, if you head along this spring, you may even be able to say hello to a baby coo or two.

### **St Abb's Head**

The rugged Berwickshire coastline is a sanctuary for thousands of seabirds, who have built their own 'city' among the crags and clifftops. The summer months are the best time to see them, but there are 'residents' there all year round. You are likely to catch sight of grey seals throughout the year but St Abb's is always worth a visit as winter arrives, when thousands of seals descend to breed. Dolphins and porpoises are a relatively common sight all year round, while in late summer you might even spot the occasional whale.

### **Culzean Castle**

The jewel of Ayrshire is surrounded by miles of country park and has almost every natural habitat right on its doorstep, with woods, coastline, ponds, caves and clifftops. The castle has a deer park where you are guaranteed to spot some red deer among other species. And, if you get there early and tread very carefully and quietly, you might also spot seals, basking on the beaches.

### **The Pass of Killiecrankie**

A stunning place to visit at any time of year although you may be fortunate to spot some of its rarest residents in Spring. Did you know that red squirrels have 'kittens' – usually in one or two litters a year and typically in February–March and May, June or July. Litter sizes vary from one to six 'kittens' but are typically three or four. Look up among the trees and you will spot the football-sized dreys that the squirrels call home.

### **Mar Lodge Estate**

This 'where the wild things are' with the estate including some of the most remote and scenic wild land in Scotland. You can spot all manner of animals within its bounds but, if you take binoculars, you will be in for a treat in Spring. This is the time of year where you will see the hares boxing, as females who are in season ward off amorous males. But watch from a distance. Hares are nervous and will run for cover the moment you start to move in their direction.

To plan your day out and also check opening times and Covid-19 restrictions and safety measures at all National Trust for Scotland properties, visit [nts.org.uk](https://www.nts.org.uk)

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**Editor's Notes:**

The National Trust for Scotland is the charity that celebrates and protects Scotland's heritage. It relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work of caring for the natural and built heritage of Scotland for everyone to enjoy.

From coastlines to castles, art to architecture, wildlife to wildernesses, the National Trust for Scotland exists to protect the national and natural treasures we all love. To plan your visit today, enter your postcode at [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk).

We would be grateful if, when referring to the National Trust for Scotland that our name is not shortened to 'the National Trust'. We are an independent organisation, separate from the National Trust. The National Trust for Scotland is commonly shortened to NTS or 'the Trust'.

