



Raven: Hard to miss as it proclaims its presence with a loud throaty croak, and displays its acrobatic skills.



Mountain ringlet: Our best known special butterfly, a local, upland species, abundant here on sunny days in July.



Frog: Thrives on these hills, and often jumps just under your feet!



Black grouse: In decline, but gaining from our enhancement of its woodland and moorland habitats.

Here be animals! Be alert and you may be rewarded with exciting sightings; these are just a few.

Hillside safari

Ben Lawers NNR lies on the north side of Loch Tay, above the A827, near Killin, within Breadalbane, 'the grandest part of Perthshire'.



The National Trust for Scotland is an independent charity with the aim of conserving, managing and promoting Scotland's cultural and natural heritage. We depend on our members and visitors to enable us to continue our work, both now and in the future. Please support the Trust by becoming a member.

Tel: 0844 4932 100 / 0844 493 2136 (NTS Killin)
Website: www.nts.org.uk

Scotland has over 50 National Nature Reserves for you to explore and enjoy. Click on www.nnr-scotland.org.uk for some natural inspiration!

Front cover photos from top left: Alpine fleabane, alpine gentian and Ben Lawers
Photography by David Mardon and Laurie Campbell

With support and financial assistance from

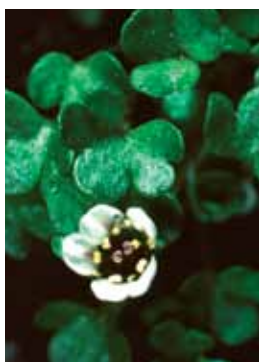


Plant monitoring

have been collected. by propagation and planting to replace those that saxifrage, our most endangered species, has been saved 'habitat restoration' and 'species recovery'. The highland and researchers from universities and other institutions. Scientific investigations are carried out both by Trust staff and other factors on the plants.

We are trying to reverse such declines. Through our of over-grazing that they are on the brink of extinction. ranges of many have become so restricted by centuries drastically reduced some populations while the natural

The last surviving highland saxifrage



The responsibility for conserving this special place means we need to take stock of what is here. A programme of detailed mapping and counting the rare plants has shown that, whilst some are holding their own, the future for others is bleak. Collecting has

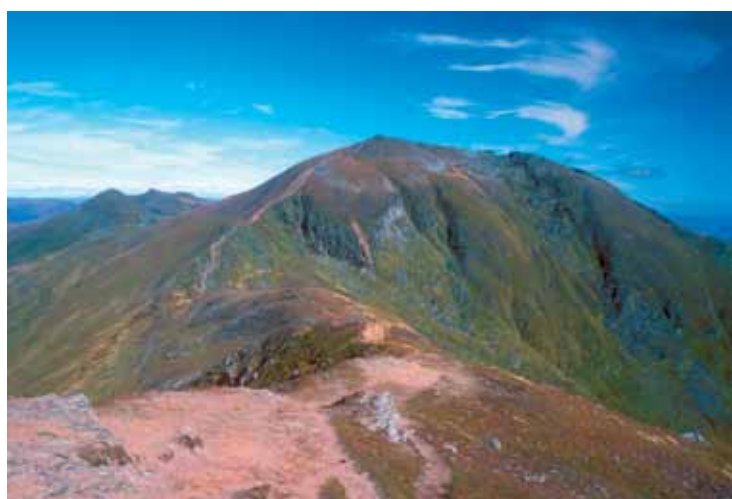
Stocktaking

Ben Lawers

NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE



'The Peak of Plant Conservation'



A lichen growing as crusts on rocks



A moss found nowhere else in Britain



species may still be discovered here.

Less well known than the flowering plants and ferns are the 'lower plants', especially mosses and lichens. Ben Lawers is the most important UK site for lichens. New

Understudied

Left: Alpine lady's mantle Right: Moss campion
Many other striking plants may easily be seen:



Left to right: Alpine gentian, alpine woodstia, alpine mouse-ear



Ben Lawers is home to several of our rarest plants. Some of them are found in only a few places in Scotland.

A celebrity roll-call

The best of its kind in Britain
Cushion grassland



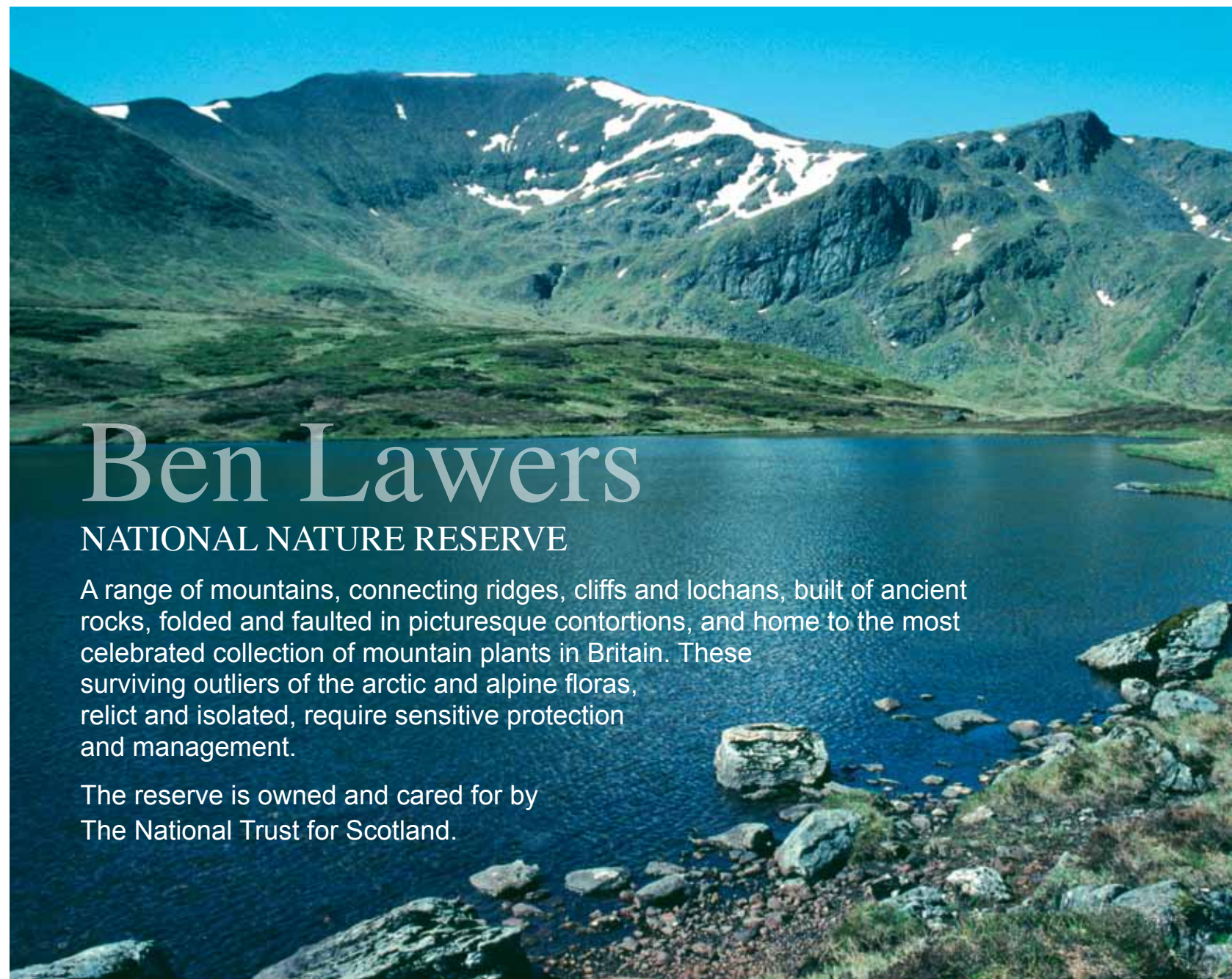
Discovered here in 1768
Alpine saxifrage



international importance. species of national and

the rare plant communities and bought these hills – to conserve They are the reason why the Trust to visit these hills at least once. why most field botanists aspire in the 18th century are the reason The mountain plants discovered

Botanical riches



Ben Lawers

NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

A range of mountains, connecting ridges, cliffs and lochans, built of ancient rocks, folded and faulted in picturesque contortions, and home to the most celebrated collection of mountain plants in Britain. These surviving outliers of the arctic and alpine floras, relict and isolated, require sensitive protection and management.

The reserve is owned and cared for by The National Trust for Scotland.

Pastoral history

People have made a living from these hills for nine thousand years. The cultural landscape is a particularly outstanding record of life over the last four centuries. The most conspicuous sign of this is in the many groups of shielings – small dwellings built halfway up the hill for seasonal use of summer grazings. Their stone walls, often banked with turf, can be seen close to most main paths.



Red deer

Where are all the trees?

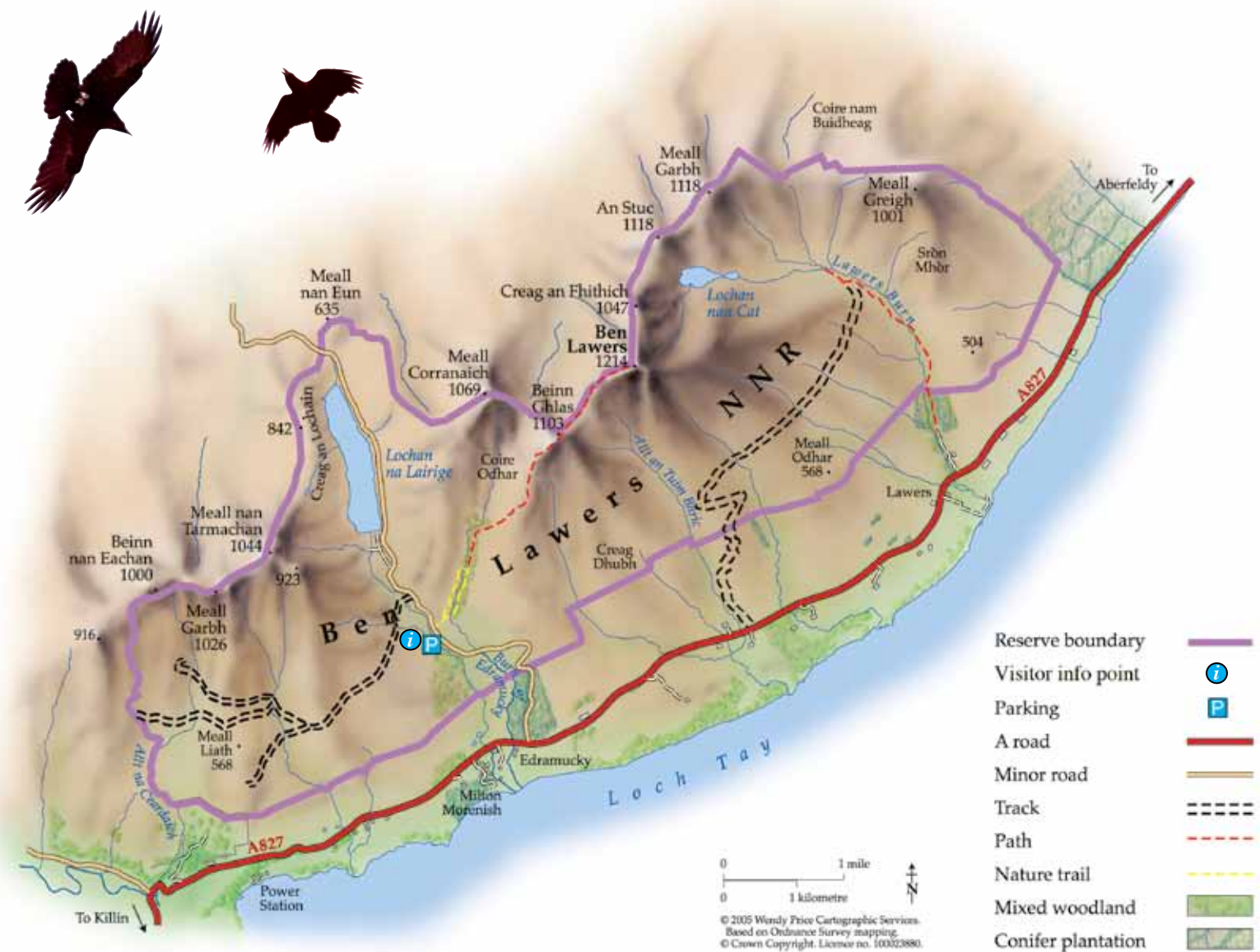
The concentrated sheep grazing since the 18th century, and increasingly large deer populations now, have had a profound effect on the vegetation. Trees, shrubs and tall



Birchwood on ledge

herbaceous plants cannot survive and regenerate and are now confined to cliff ledges. Farmers have rights to graze their sheep on Trust land on the Ben Lawers range, but the red deer is a native of the

hills and its presence is important to the land. However, numbers are such that seedling trees cannot escape the many hungry mouths, so culling of deer is carried out on the reserve. The deer are easy to see and an exciting attraction for many visitors.



Paradise lost?

One outcome of the prolonged human occupation of this area is the loss of some of the natural flora and fauna. Only remnants survive of the native trees, shrubs and tall herbaceous plants which once flourished, most now confined to cliff ledges that are inaccessible to grazing animals. These show that Ben Lawers can support the most flower-rich treeline woodland in the Highlands – a paradise for naturalists. Using fences in the short term, we are trying to restore viable woodland, scrub and tall flowering plants on the Reserve for future generations to enjoy. This developing habitat is already attracting exciting birds and big, colourful moths and their caterpillars, which are now often seen on the Nature Trail.



▲ Small pearl-bordered fritillary

Close encounters

Experience the varied plants and wildlife on the Reserve by walking around the Nature Trail, an area slowly returning to a dynamic, sparse, patchy woodland habitat for an increased variety of life. This 1km loop passes close to the Edramucky Burn, before climbing gently out of the gorge to reveal stunning views of Loch Tay and the mountains beyond. A self-guiding booklet is available for sale at the visitor information point, next to the Reserve car park. During the summer the Ranger staff offer a programme of guided walks for visitors of all ages. They may also be able to assist groups by prior arrangement. Please don't pick the wild plants. Leave them for everyone to enjoy!



Rowan



Angelica regenerating



Red grouse

Ben Lawers with cloud inversion



Walking high

Ben Lawers and the neighbouring mountains are popular high level walks, enjoyed by thousands of people each year. With nine summits over nine miles, you have a choice of several different day walks. Although not unduly hazardous, there

are risks, as with all mountains, and a mistake may have serious consequences, **especially in winter**. We are not adapted for winter survival like the ptarmigan (right). Please ensure that you are competent and equipped for the walk you plan to do, **before** you go out on the hill. We wish you an exhilarating and safe day on the hills.



Healing the hills



Ben Lawers path scar in the 1980s

It is said leave 'nothing but footprints', but on such popular mountains, even these have an effect. Walkers on Ben Lawers leave over 250 million boot prints a year, more than the fragile mountain vegetation can tolerate: it quickly dies. Dead turf, boots and rain water on steep ground equal erosion, creating enormous scars defacing the landscape. We counter this by expensive path repairs and maintenance to heal the scars and prevent them from widening. But with some 32km of paths, we are still trying to catch up and even when all the basic repairs have been done, maintenance will be a full-time job. Repairing the scar on Ben Lawers is taking years of path work, some experimental, at high altitude and often in unpleasant conditions with only the raven for company.



Path repair team