Ben Lawers
NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

‘The Peak of Plant Conservation’

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: 0131 243 9300 / 01567 820 988 (NTS Killin)
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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 biotopes, alpine gentian and Ben Lawers. Photography by David Mardon and Laurie Campbell.
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.

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

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. Reparing 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.

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 Mountain Visitor Centre. 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!