

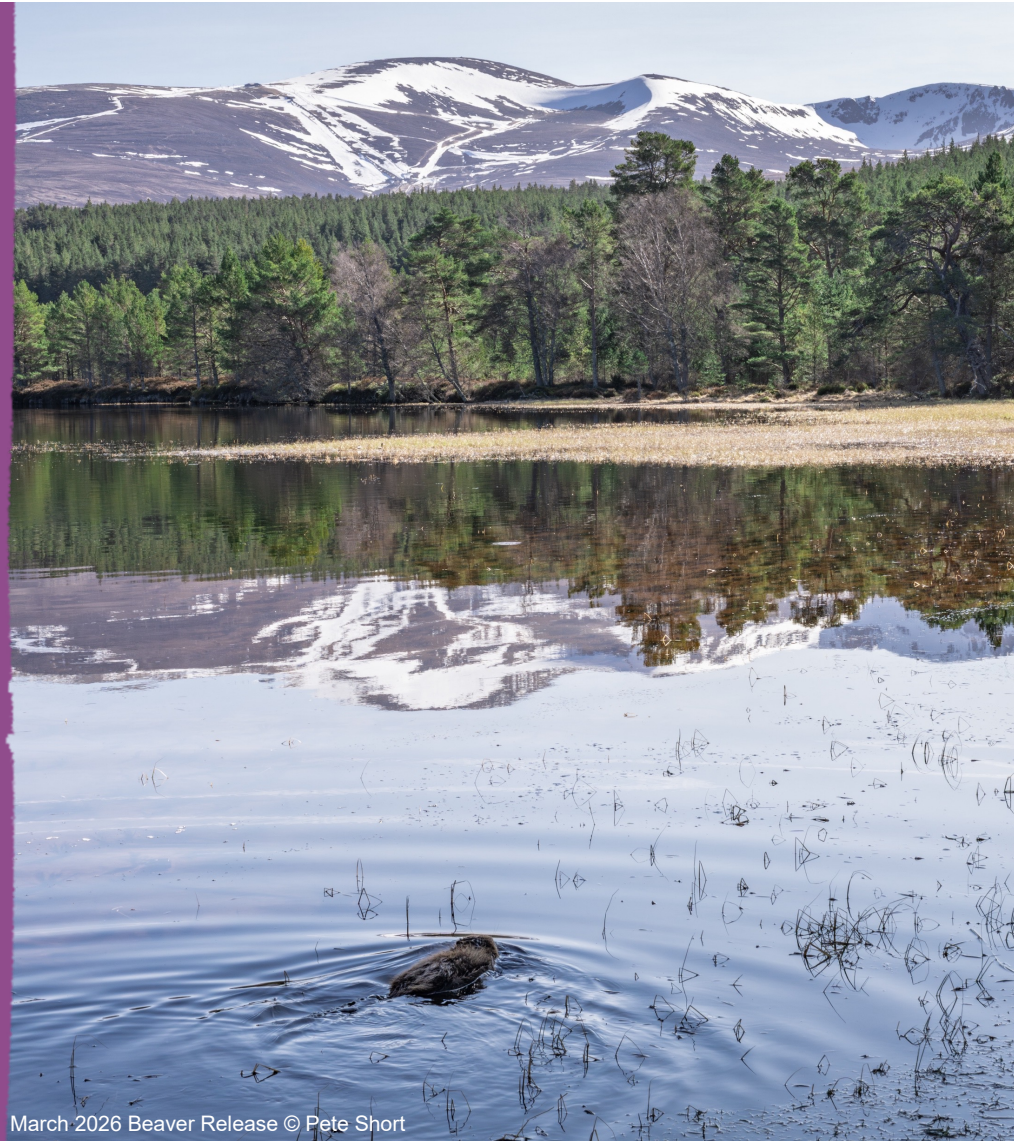
Bringing Beavers Back to the Cairngorms National Park

Dr Sarah Henshall
Head of Conservation



Cairngorms
National Park

Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh



March 2026 Beaver Release © Pete Short



Wild Spaces Pearl & Dean 30 second film showing in cinemas across the UK!

Cairngorms Nature Team



Team Beaver



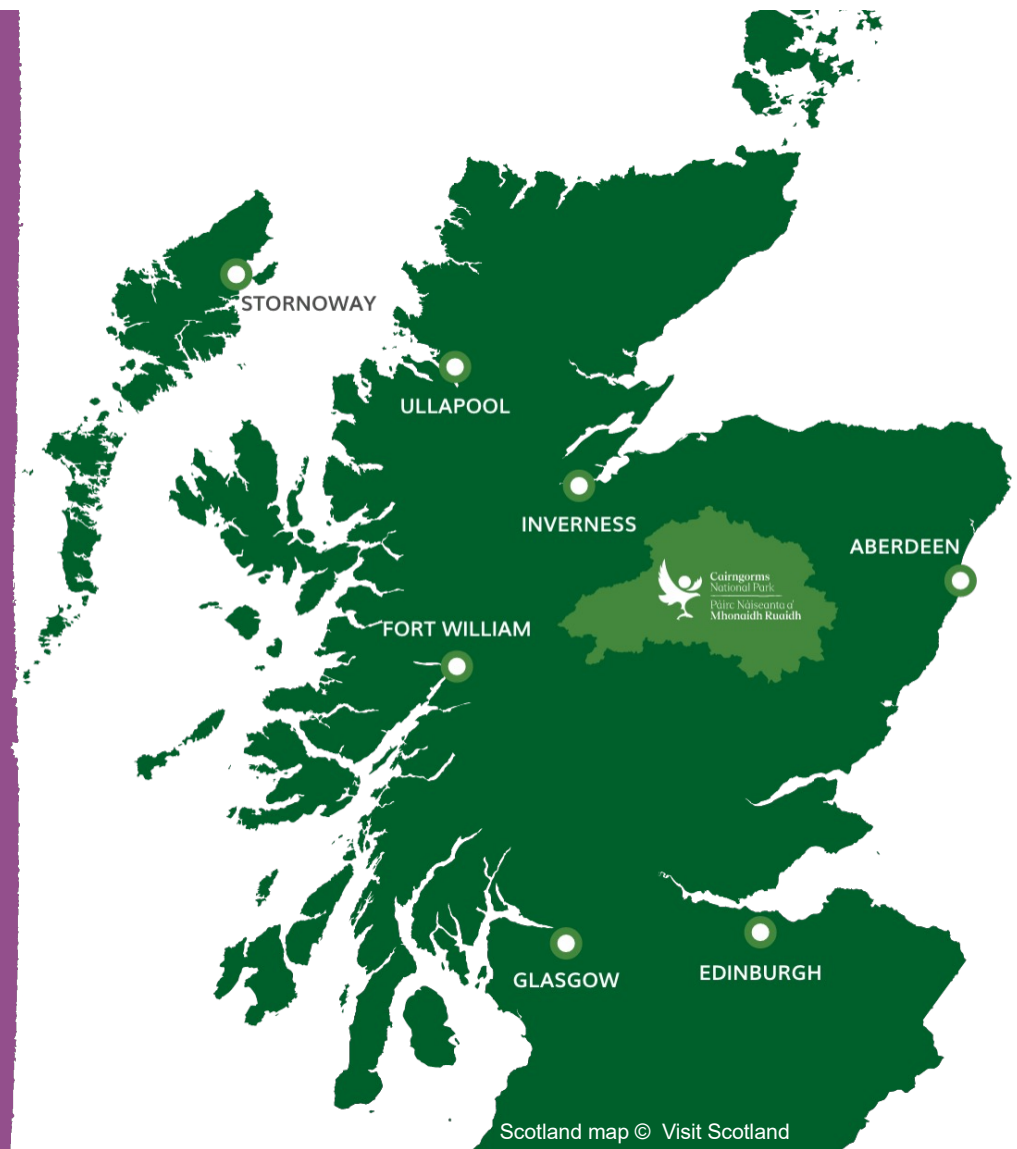
Pete Jonathan



Sally

Cairngorms National Park

- Largest National Park in the UK
- Home to 25% of the UK's most rare and endangered species.
- Ambitious National Park Partnership Plan
- Some of the best riparian habitat in Scotland in the River Spey catchment

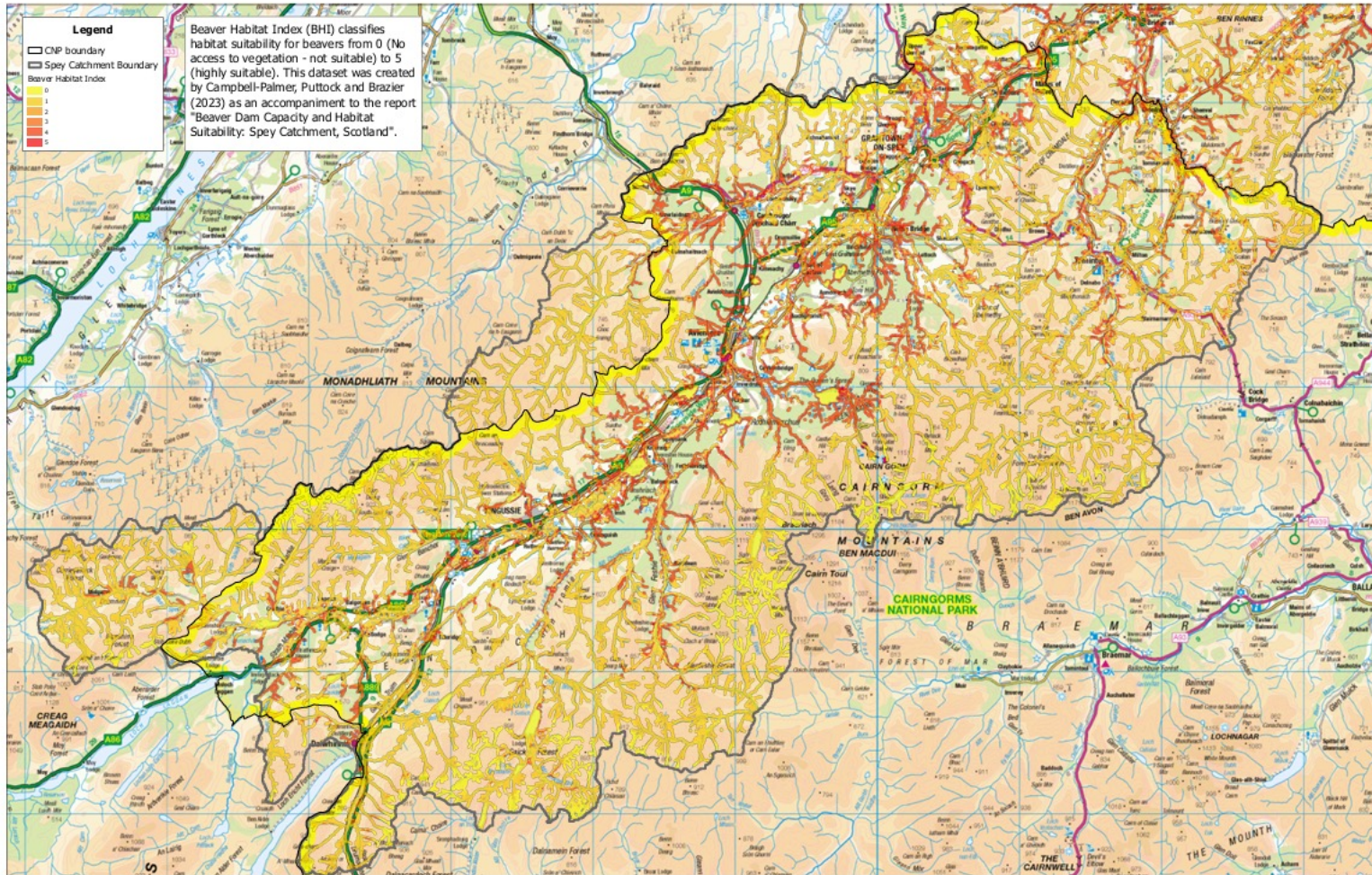




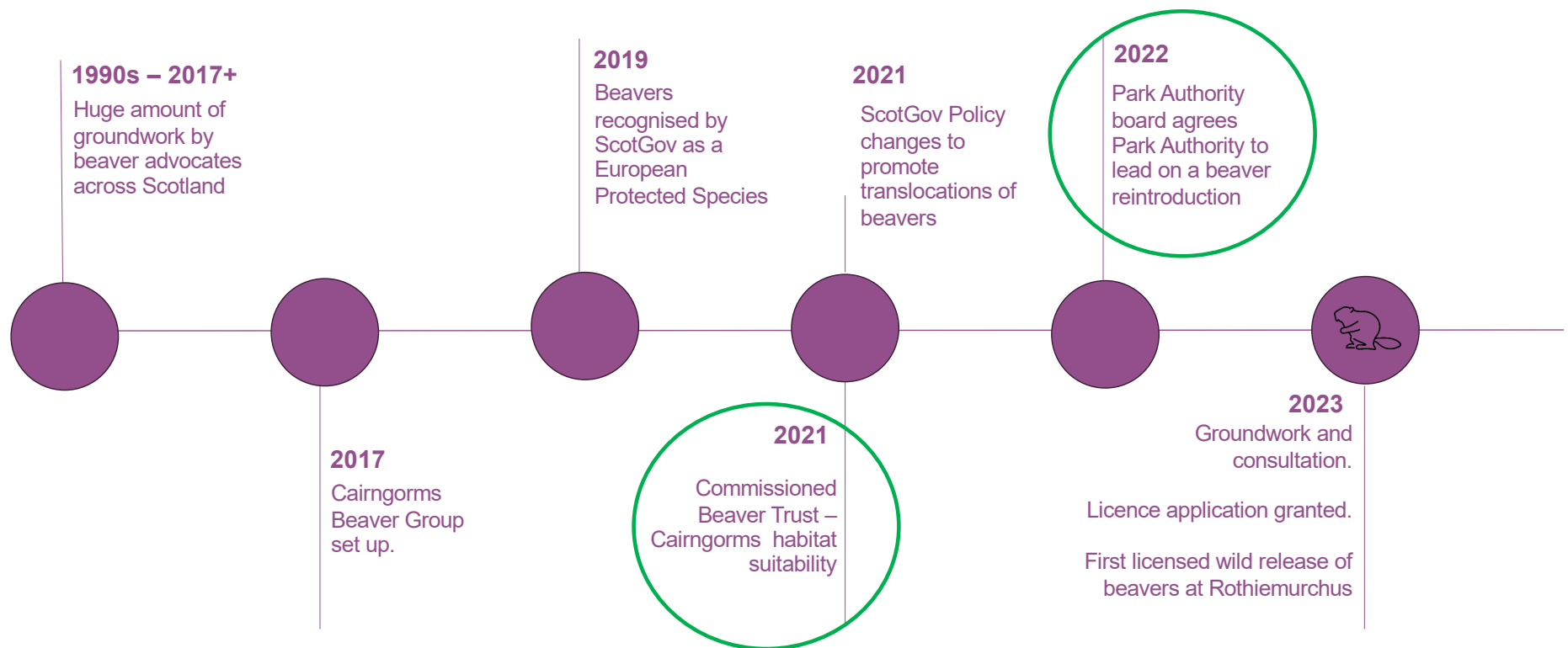
Elliot McCandless



© Ronan Dougan



Bringing Beavers Back timeline



Whole catchment approach

- We don't own or manage any land
- Spey is highly designated
- What happens when they move out-with the Park?
- Resource requirements?
- Risk of negative publicity, impact on other species recovery projects



© Alison Flemming

Partnerships



Rothiemurchus © James Shooter

Pre-licence engagement

- 4 pre-consultation 'Beaver Blethers'
- Followed by a 6-week formal consultation for local people and key stakeholders

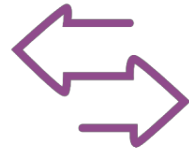


Engagement Results

14 August to 25 September 2023

Over 75% of respondents supportive

Conversations are still continuing



42
days of formal
engagement



515
online survey
respondents



393
comments
received, online or
at events



104
attendees at
events



84,833
people reached on
social media



2,537
likes, reacts and
shares



33,688
video views



18
site visits with
landowners and
managers

Protected Habitats and Species

Habitats Regulation Assessment and the Monitoring and Mitigation Plan



First release December 2023

License submitted Oct 2023

License approved early Dec 2023

First beaver releases 18 Dec 2023



© Elliot McCandless



© CNPA



Cairngorms Beaver Population Summary

12 releases
7 sites



2 more years
of releases



40 beavers
20 wild born kits



Year 1 (2023/24) releases – 18

Year 2 (2024/25) releases – 15

Year 3 (2025/26) releases – 7

2024 wild-born kits – 2 (from 2 families)

2025 wild-born kits – 18 (from 8 families)

Kits!



Beaver kits born in the Cairngorms National Park © CNPA

Dedicated Beaver Team

- Public engagement
- Site monitoring
- Stakeholder engagement and organising events
- Delivering beaver mitigation
- Feeding beavers
- Kit watches
- Handing out beaver sticks!
- Anything beaver related...



Pete (Beaver Project Officer) and Jonathan (Beaver Project Manager). @ Brenna Jessie

Opportunities & challenges



© Laurie Campbell



© Pete Short & Kaye Nicolson

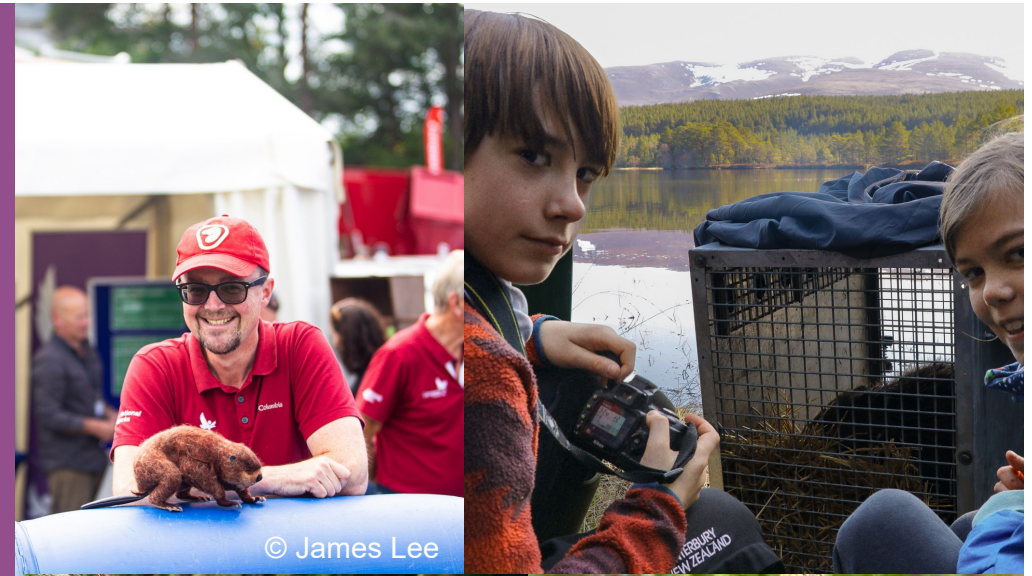
Beavers doing what beavers do!



Beaver Modified Wetland drone flyover, Cairngorms National Park © Pete Short

Opportunities

- Local school children attended release, school visits
- Beaver trail
- Kit watches
- Collaborative research to show habitat change and benefits
- Eco tourism, supporting local economy



A safe place to watch beavers

Beaver Trail, Rothiemurchus

SUMMARY

Visit Lochan Mor in Rothiemurchus Forest, to which beavers were reintroduced to the Cairngorms National Park in 2023. The route continues along forest paths and a minor road to reach Loch an Eilein, with its famed ruined castle. The route returns on tracks and roads through farmland and forestry.

 Grade ([key](#))  Bog Factor ([key](#))  Rating

TERRAIN

Good footpaths, tracks and minor road. Waymarked.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Bus to Inverdrue from Aviemore.

START

Woodlands carpark, Inverdrurie. [Open in Google Maps](#).

Add walk to wishlist.



© Emma Mchale

© CNPA

Challenges (and opportunity)

Crofters and farmers in Cairngorms park protest



A protest was held outside Cairngorms National Park Authority offices in Granttown-on-Spey on Monday night

Mairi Riddoch, BBC Naidheachdan, Granttown-on-Spey and **Jennifer Bowey**, BBC Scotland News, Inverness

16 January 2024

Positive results:

- Now a formalised group Cairngorms Crofter & Farming Community to engage with
- Cairngorms Agricultural Advisory Group formed with a beaver sub-group
- New full time Park Authority Agricultural Advisor appointed – also a local farmer
- Much better communication

Farmland and flood embankments

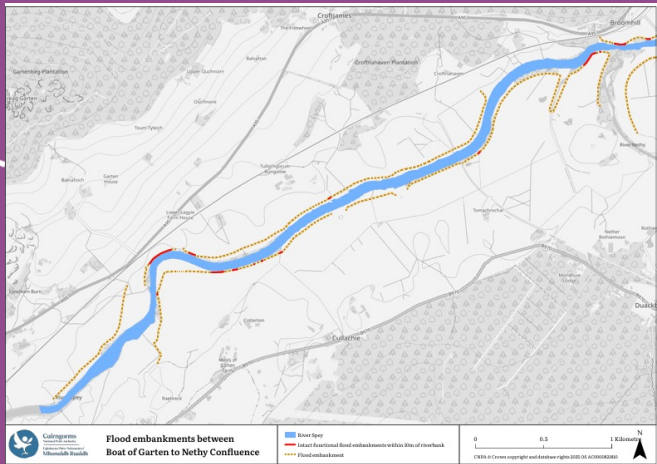


River Spey and River Dulnain embankment condition assessment- 84.3km assessed 84% in good condition

Remaining moderate or poor condition with existing breaches, eroding sections

12.8 km of flood embankments in good condition within 10m of the river

Climate change is the biggest threat, need to secure climate resilient catchments



Aspen & Lichens



© Sarah Henshall



Monitoring & Mitigation Programme

- Monthly/weekly site visits
 - Annual canoe survey of the Spey
 - Respond to concerns promptly, in person
 - Support land managers with license applications
 - Deploy proportionate mitigation if needed
- So far: 1 dam removed, 2 burrows filled in, lots of trees weld meshed



Weld meshed aspen © Jonathan Willet

Beavers are Back- the future

- Focus on co-existence
- Support land managers & communities
- Scale back on intensive monitoring
- Continue listening and learning
- Research, provide case studies on Salmon, Freshwater pearl mussel and aspen
- Public engagement and education
- Share learning and support other catchment scale projects



Thanks to all our partners for helping us to Bring Beavers Back to the Cairngorms



**BEAVER
TRUST**



SCOTLAND



**Forestry and
Land Scotland**
Coilltearachd agus
Fearann Alba



ROTHIEMURCHUS



**Cairngorms
National Park**

**Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh**



© Ronan Dougan



Wildlife at a beaver burrow: Jan/Feb 2026 © CNPA