



Invaders in Glenveagh National Park

Covering 160 square kilometres, Glenveagh National Park in the Irish province of Donegal is the second largest national park in Ireland. In the mid-nineteenth century, the area was bought by John George Adair who forced the farmers living in the region to vacate the area. In 1873, Glenveagh Castle, situated on the shores of Lough Veagh, was completed as a hunting lodge. It has a Victorian-style garden attached to it. Although the grounds appear much older, they have modern furnishing elements. A particularly impressive feature is the heated outdoor pool on the lakeshore.

In 1975, the land was sold to the Irish state. As the area was not populated, nothing stood in the way of establishing a national park. In 1981, the gardens and castle were also given to the state - since the mid-1980s, the national park and castle have been open to visitors.

The national park is home to a large number of different habitats - from high mountain vegetation to moors and densely forested valleys, and is now an important nature reserve. It is known for its large herds of red deer and the reintroduction of the golden eagle to Ireland.

The castle garden is one of the five most important gardens in Ireland. The castle's only three owners gradually expanded the gardens. Today, the plant collections house many plants from the temperate latitudes of the southern hemisphere but also from Asia. And it is precisely this that is now proving to be a problem, because not all species remained within the garden walls.



One of the most prominent invasive species in Glenveagh National Park is the rhododendron. This beautiful flowering woody plant originates from Asia. The humid climate and acidic soils are perfect for the plants introduced to the National Park around 1890. Landscape beautification and protection for game was the original aim, but the shrubs are increasingly displacing native species. The plants form dense bushes and obstruct other plants with their shade. They also

release inhibitors into the soil that hinder the growth of other plants. Even after the bushes have been removed, it is therefore difficult for other plants to reestablish themselves. Control is mainly mechanical - a difficult task in the sometimes steep terrain. The plants root deeply and quickly sprout again from rootstocks. Birds spread the seeds quickly in the national park. Birds also play a major role in the spread of other neophytes, i.e. alien plant species. Our ranger showed us a small plant from New Zealand that has also proved to be a problematic invader.

