Some like it cool - and wet
Fionnar is fliuch

At first glance, you might not even notice Glencripesdale's main claim to fame. You need to look closely – on the trees craobhan and boulders, under overhanging rocks, along shady burn edges where water splashes but direct sunlight seldom reaches. Focus on the cool, damp, shadowy places, and then home-in. The detail will astonish. These are the corners where hundreds of different species of non-flowering plants thrive.

Mosses còinnich and liverworts – or 'bryophytes' – are supreme among these lower plants. Glencripesdale is one of the top three woods in Britain for its mix of bryophytes. And since Britain is one of the best places in Europe for moss and liverwort variety, these small plants have international note. The number of species here is on a par with the bryophyte variety you find in some tropical rainforests.

Dh'fhaodadh nach mothaich thu carson a tha Gleann Creabasdail ainmeil air a' chiad sealladh. Feumaidh tu coimhead gu cùramach – air na craobhan agus na clachan, fo chreagan agus ri oirean fasgach nan allt far a bheil uisge a' stealladh ach far nach ruig solas na grèine ach ainneamh. Coimhead anns na h-àitichean fionnar, tais, dorcha. Cuiridh e iongnadh ort na chì thu. Seo far a bheil na ceudan de lusan air nach eil dìthean a' fàs.

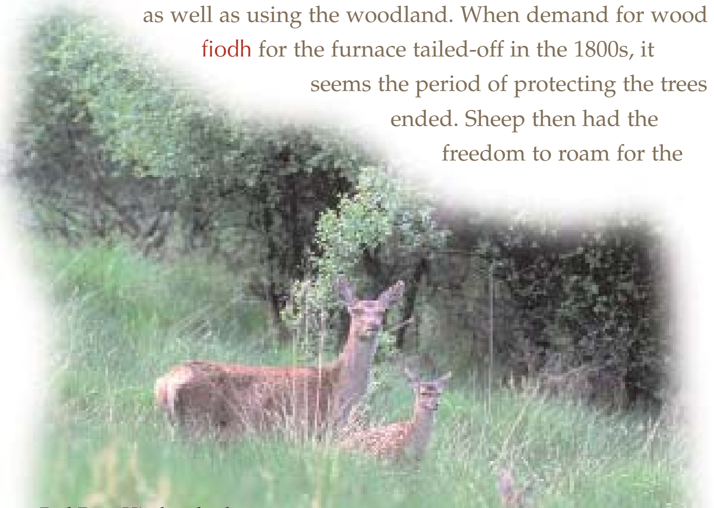
Tha còinnich is cuislean aibheach – no 'bryophytes' – a tha sònraichte nam measg. Tha Gleann Creabasdail air tè dhe na prìomh thrì choilltean ann am Breatainn airson na th' ann dhiubh. Agus seach gur e Breatainn fear dhe na h-àitichean as fheàrr san Roinn Eòrpa airson na th' ann de sheòrschan còinnich is de chuislean aibheach, tha na lusan beaga seo ainmeil gu h-eadar-nàiseanta. Tha an àireamh ghneàthan an seo dìreach mar a tha e ann an cuid de choilltean uisge tropaigeach.

Charcoal and sheep
Gualasg agus caoraich

Around 1775 large flocks of sheep arrived in this area. At the same time, there was a demand for charcoal made from local wood to heat the smelting of pig iron at the Lorne Furnace. Based at Bonawe, this operated for about 120 years from 1753.

The Duke of Argyll, who owned the Glencripesdale woods, took care to protect this living asset. He had a stone dyke built in 1786-8 to keep sheep caoraich out of the woodland. He also put strict limits on how much wood his tenants could take for their own use.

Areas not enclosed were important for sheep grazing. A small community at Camas Salach grew crops and shepherded sheep, as well as using the woodland. When demand for wood fiodh for the furnace tailed-off in the 1800s, it seems the period of protecting the trees ended. Sheep then had the freedom to roam for the next century, until the Forestry Commission bought the ground in the 1950s.



Red Deer Hind and calves
Eilid is laoigh

Nowadays, the reserve is ring-fenced to stop red deer coming in from next-door sporting estates, where numbers of deer are higher than in the reserve. But the fence doesn't totally keep them out, as deer are powerful swimmers when they fancy a woodland nibble.

Mu 1775 thàinig treudan mòra chaorach dhan sgìre seo. Aig an aon àm bha iarraidh mhòr ann air gualasg air a dhèanamh de dh'fhiodh an àite airson teas airson iarann a leaghadh ann am Fùirneis Latharna ann am Bun Odha. Bha an obair seo a' dol mu 120 bliadhna bho 1753.

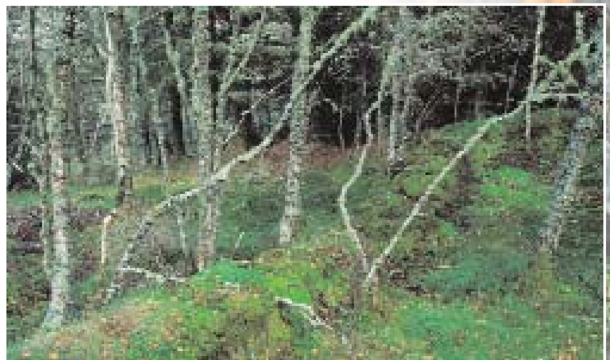
Bhuineadh coille Ghlinn Creabasdail do Dhiùc Earra-ghàidheil agus bha e a' toirt an aire oirre. Thog e balla cloiche ann an 1786-8 gus caoraich a chumail a-mach às a' choille. Bha riaghailtean teann aige cuideachd mu dheidhinn na dh'fhaodadh an luchd-màil a ghearrdh de dh'fhiodh dhaibh fhèin.

Bha na raointean nach robh air am feansadh cudromach airson ionaltradh chaorach. Bha coimhearsnachd bheag ann an Camas Salach a bha a' cur bàrr agus a' cumail chaorach a bharrachd air a bhith a' cleachdadh na coille. Nuair a chrìon an t-iarraidh air fiodh airson na fùirneis anns na 1800an, bidh e coltach gun deach sgur de choimhead às dèidh nan craobhan. Bha cead aig caoraich an uair sin a dhol far an togradh iad fad ceud bliadhna gus an do cheannaich Coimisean na Coilltearachd an talamh sna 1950an.

An-diugh, tha feansa mun tèarmann gus nach tig fèidh a-steach on oighreachd far a bheil iad nas pailte na tha iad san tèarmann. Ach chan eil an fheansa gan cumail a-mach uile gu lèir oir tha fèidh math air snàmh nuair a tha miann rud-eigin blasta às a' choille orra.

Dog Lichen
Lus-ghionaich

Fern
Raineach



Old enclosure dyke
Seann bhalla dìon

Glencripesdale

NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

This slim sliver of native woodland is a place of natural shifts. Seaweed beds can almost touch the roots of trees at its rim. Burn gullies link slope and hill, providing a shady haven for one of the finest ranges of mosses and other lower plants in Britain. Heathland and bog sit above the treeline, a brief buzzard's glide from the nearest oaks and birches beilte.

This blend provides opportunities for many kinds of wildlife – from otters to oak trees daraich, ferns to dragonflies. Powered by water, rock and wood, it's now increasingly rare to find such a natural mix intact and healthy.

TÈARMANN NÀDAIR NÀISEANTA

Ghlinn Creabasdail

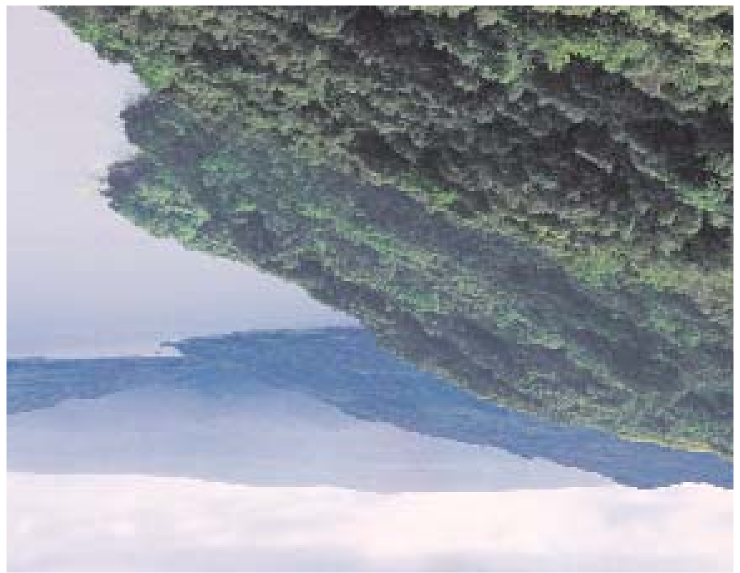
Tha an t-sliseag seo de choilltich dhùthchasaich làn ghluasadan nàdarra Cha mhòr nach eil imirean feamad a' suathadh ann am freumhaichean chraobhan air an iomall. Tha sgoran nan allt a' ceangal an leothaid ris a' bheinn. Tha seo a' toirt fasgadh do raon còinnich agus do lusan eile cho math 's a th' ann am Breatainn. Tha mòinteach agus boglach os cionn loidhne nan craobhan. Tha craobhan daraich is craobhan beithe gu math faisge.

Tha am measgachadh seo math airson fiadh-bheatha – eadar dòbhrain is daraich, raineach is tarbhain nathrach. Le uisge, creag is fiodh ga dhèanamh cumhachdach, 's ann ainneamh a-nis a chì thu measgachadh cho nàdarra 's cho fallain.

Glencripesdale
National Nature Reserve

Tèarmann Nàdair Nàiseanta
Ghlinn Creabasdail

'The Real Slim Shady'
'Anns an dubhar'



The reserve lies on the south shore of Loch Sunart. Turn off the A884 at Liddesdale to the end of the public road. Entry is on foot or bike along a 5 mile (8km) track.

For more information please contact:
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Front cover photos: enchanter's nightshade, otter and Glencripesdale.
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Scotland's natural heritage is a local, national and global asset. SNH promotes its care and improvement, its responsible enjoyment, its greater understanding and appreciation, and its sustainable use, now and for future generations.

Tha dualchas nàdarra na h-Alba cudromach aig ìre ionadail, nàiseanta is eadar-nàiseanta. Tha cùram is leasachadh, toileachas, barrachd tuigse is meas agus cleachdadh seasmhach an urra ri Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba an-diugh agus airson an àm ri teachd.

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PROJECT PART-FINANCED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION
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Making it work together

The Sunart Oakwoods Initiative is a partnership between the community and local agencies including Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Lochaber Enterprise and the Highland Council.

Ash and Rowan trees
Uinnsinn is caorainn

This wood rocks
Creagan

The type of rock over which soils develop can have a big effect on the plants that grow there. Different rocks vary a great deal in chemical make-up and this affects how useful they are to plants.

Some, like basalt, can break down to add 'base-rich' plantfood to soils, which produce fertile torach soils. Others, such as granite, produce acidic, food-poor soils.

Glencripesdale is unique among the Sunart woods in having a very clear change in plantlife from east to west. This shows the variation in the soil and bedrock. In the east, the more acid soils have more downy birch and oak growing on them, with alder and willows in the wetter areas.

To the west, more base-rich soils support more ash uinnseann and elm leamhan trees. Herbs such as sanicle, woodruff, dog's mercury and enchanter's nightshade that grow here also like fairly rich, basalt-derived soil.

Dog's Mercury
Lus ghlaine bhracadail

Faodaidh an seòrsa creige air am bi ùir a' tighinn beò buaidh mhòr a thoirt air na lusan a' fàs an sin. Tha ceimigean eadar-dhealaichte ann an seòrsachan chreagan eadar-dhealaichte agus tha seo a' toirt buaidh air dè chò feumil 's a tha iad do lusan.

Tha cuid, mar basalt, a bhriseas sìos gus maitheas beartach a chur dhan ùir agus a nì i torach. Tha cuid eile, mar clach-ghràin, a' dèanamh ùir shearbh anns nach eil mòran maitheis. Tha Gleann Creabasdail gun shamhail am measg coilltean Shuaineirt oir tha na lusan a tha a' fàs air an taobh an ear agus an taobh an iar gu math eadar-dhealaichte. Tha seo a' sealltainn mar a tha an ùir agus a' bhun chreag eadar-dhealaichte. Ris an ear, tha beithe agus darach a' fàs far a bheil barrachd searbhaig san ùir, agus tha feàrna agus seileach anns na h-àitichean as fliche.

Ris an iar, tha uinnseann agus leamhan a' fàs far a bheil an talamh nas beartaiche. Tha lusain mar am bodan-coille, lus a' chaitheimh agus lus Ghlinne Bhracadail a' fàs an seo oir is toigh leotha ùir a tha gu math beartach agus air tighinn o bhasalt.

Felling for the future
A' leagail chraobhan san àm ri teachd

In the 1970s, the Forestry Commission planted blocks of conifers on the ground that is now the National Nature Reserve. This was in line with a national push at the time to produce more timber.

But times have changed. The Forestry Commission now sets great store by protecting the natural variety of species. It's been working with SNH and other partners throughout Sunart – using grant-aid from European Union funds – on a major project to restore and protect native woodlands coilltean around Loch Sunart. This seeks to give local people the benefits from looking after their local woods into the future.

As part of that work obair, SNH – now sole owner of the NNR – is taking the conifer blocks out of Glencripesdale. We plan to move timber to a floating pontoon and load it onto a barge, from where it can be taken by sea to sawmills or other end users.

Sna 1970an, chuir Coimisean na Coilltearachd craobhan durcain air an talamh a tha a-nis san Ionad Tèarmainn Nàiseanta. Bha seo mar thoradh air iomairt nàiseanta a bha a' dol aig an àm airson tuilleadh fiodh a dhèanamh.

Ach tha cùisean air atharrachadh. Tha Coimisean na Coilltearachd a-nis a' cur cuideam mòr air a bhith a' dìon na th' ann de ghnèathan nàdarra. Tha iad air a bhith ag obair còmhla ri Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba agus com-pàirtichean eile air feadh Shuaineirt – le taic airgid bho mhaoin on Aonadh Eòrpaich – air pròiseact mòr gus coilltean dùthchasach mu Loch Suaineart a dhìon. Tha seo a' feuchainn ri na buannachdan a tha a' tighinn bho bhith a' coimhead an dèidh nan coilltean san sgìre a thoirt do mhuinntir an àite.

Mar phàirt dhen obair sin, tha Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba – dom buin an t-Ionad Tèarmainn Nàiseanta – a-nis a' toirt nan craobhan durcain à Gleann Creabasdail. Tha sinn am beachd fiodh a chur air bàta agus a chur gu muilnean shàbhaidh no gu luchd-cleachdaidh eile.

A real 'otspot
Deagh àite dha na dòbhrain

Otter
Dòbhran

The waters that lap Glencripesdale are cool and clear. From the track, you can peer below the surface and see toffee-coloured fronds of knotted wrack and other seaweeds. These seaweed beds make ideal feeding areas for otters dobhràin as they search for crabs and fish. These rich pickings also attract sea eagles eager to snatch food from unwary otters.

Loch Sunart has a thriving otter population and surveys show the Glencripesdale shore is a hotspot for them. But the otters don't limit themselves to the saltwater. Having a good wash in freshwater is an important way for an otter to keep its fur in trim. A burn gully can be a handy, hideaway haven for otter bathing. And by following the burn uphill at spawning time, an otter might find a frog or toad to munch, or make its way to the open fresh water of the Dubh Lochan.

If you journey from the sea shore to the hilltops, the sounds of birds can give pointers to changes in habitat along the way. Gulls faoileagan and oystercatchers by the shore give way to the singing of tits, robin, wren and willow warblers as you move through the summer woodlands. Higher still, the mewing calls of buzzards ring out above the trees and over the hill ground where the meadow pipits add their thin cheeping to the breeze.

Tha an t-uisge ann an Gleann Creabasdail fionnar is soilleir. On cheum, faodaidh tu coimhead sìos agus chì thu feamainn bhuilgeanach is feamainn eile fon uisge. Tha na h-imirean feamad math dha na dòbhrain nuair a tha iad an tòir air crùbagan is iasg.

Tha an dòbhran pailt ann an Loch Suaineart agus tha rannsachadh a' sealltainn gu bheil cladach Ghlinn Creabasdail math air an son. Ach chan ann dìreach ann an sàl a bhios na dòbhrain. Tha e cudromach dhan dòbhran e bhith ga nighe fhèin ann am fìor-uisge airson a bhian a chumail grinn. Faodaidh sgoran nan allt a bhith na dheagh àite do dhòbhrain airson iad fhèin nighe. Ma leanas an dòbhran an t-allt suas dhan bheinn aig àm sìolachaidh, dh'fhaodadh gum faigh e losgann no muile-mhàg a dh'itheas e, no 's dòcha gun dean e a shlighe gu fìor-uisge an Dubh Lochain.

Ma choisicheas tu on chladach gu mullaich nan cnuic, innsidh fuaimean nan eòin dhut càite bheil na h-àrainnean aca. Tha faoileagan is trìlleachain rin cluinntinn ris a' chladach agus gocain, brù-dearg, dreathan donn is crìonagan-giuthais sa choille as t-samhradh. Shuas nas àirde, cluinnear clamhain os cionn nan craobhan agus dìdigein a' ceilearadh sa ghaoith.

Wren
Dreathan donn

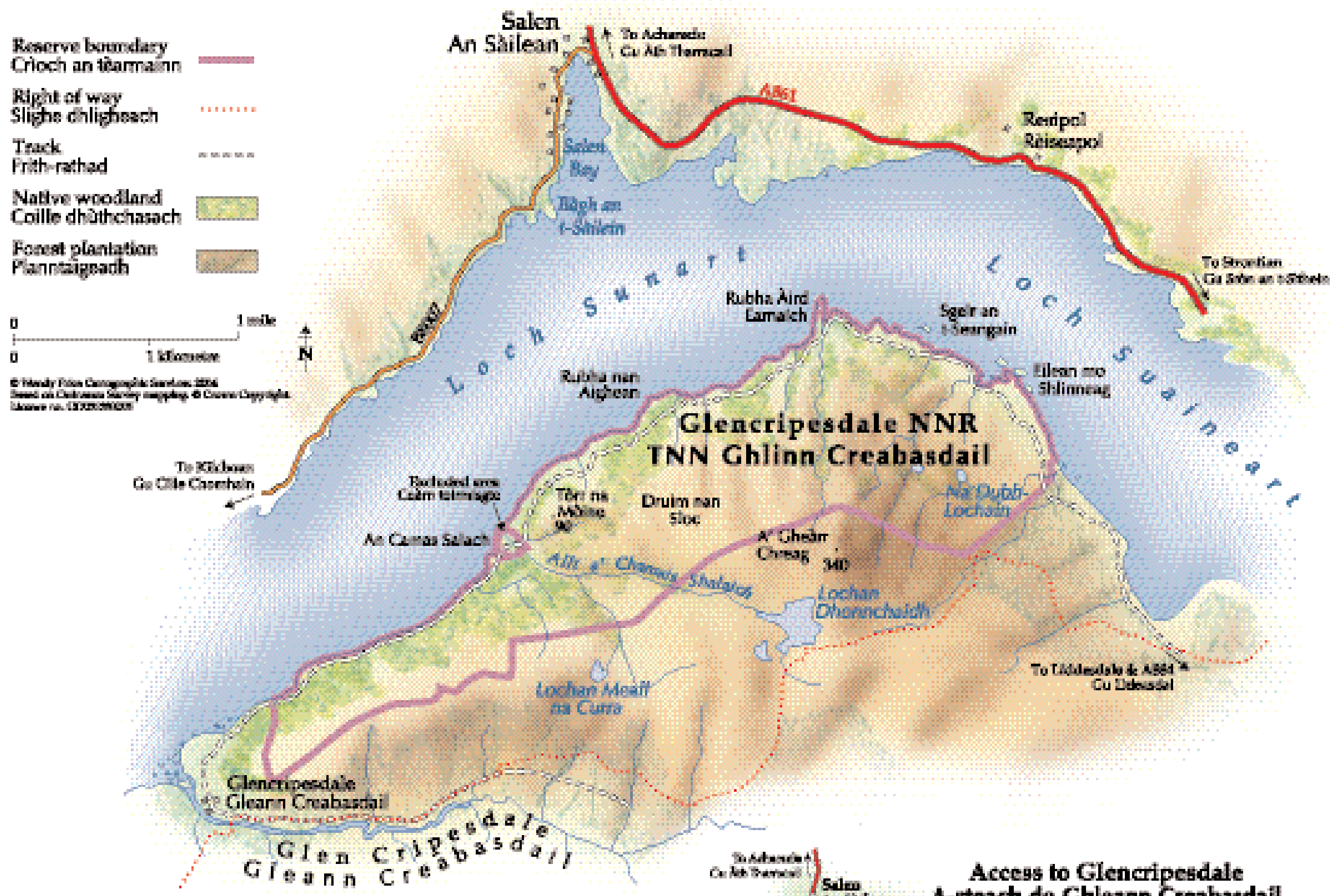
White-faced Darter dragonfly
Tarbh-nathrach bhlàir

Sea eagle
Iolair'-mhara

Getting there
A' faighinn ann

Glencripesdale takes effort to reach. Access is possible with care by boat and there are local operators. However, unless you're joining the occasional organised group visit, most people arrive on foot or bike along the main track that runs the length of the woodland.

From the A884 near the south-eastern shore of Loch Sunart (opposite Strontian), take the Liddesdale road about a mile west of Achleek. If you're in a vehicle, find a parking spot that won't obstruct other traffic along this small public road rathad. From the end of the public road you'll have a 3km walk or cycle along the private estate track to the NNR entrance. The track then continues for a further 8km west through the wood to the NNR's western entrance.



Feumaidh tu oidhirp a dhèanamh gus faighinn a Ghleann Creabasdail. Nas lugha na bhios tu ann am fear dhe na buidhnean sònraichte a bhios a' dol ann an dràsta is a-rithist, feumaidh tu dhol ann dhe do chois no air baidhsagal air a' cheum a tha a' dol tron choille.

Bhon A884 faisg air a' chladach an ear dheas air Loch Suaineart (mu choinneimh Sròn an t-Sìthein), gabh rathad Lìdeasdal. Ma tha thu ann an carbad, faigh àite pàircidh far nach cuir thu bacadh air carbadan eile air an rathad phoblach seo. Bho cheann an rathaid, feumaidh tu coiseachd no a dhol air baidhsagal air ceum prìobhaideach na h-oighreachd chun an Ionad Tèarmainn Nàiseanta. Tha an ceum an uair sin a' cumail a' dol 8 cilemeataire an chun an iar tron choille guinntreadh siar an Ionaid.