

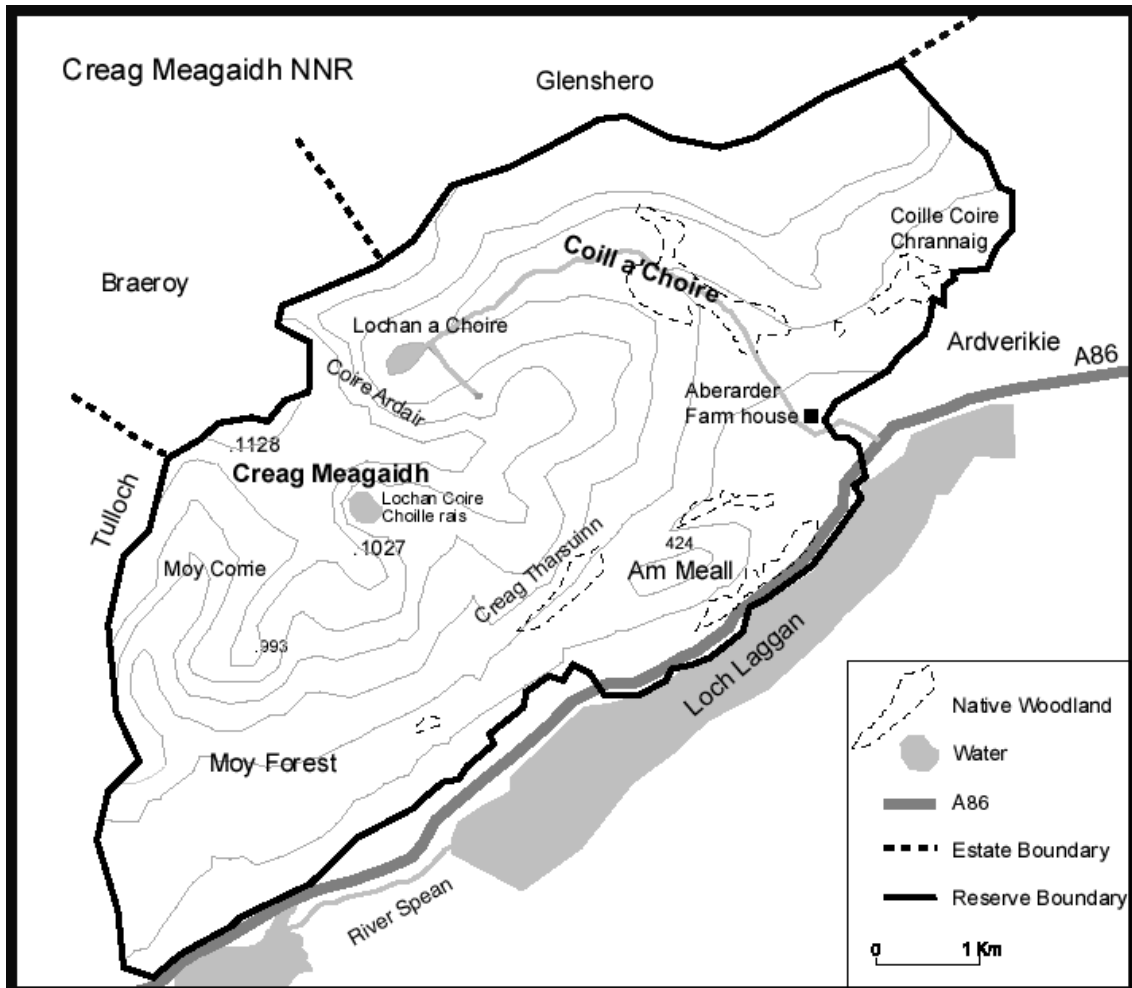


SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION – THE BACKGROUND

Creag Meagaidh National Nature Reserve covers 3,940 ha in Badenoch and Strathspey. The Reserve is bounded by Tulloch and Braeroy Estates to the west, Glenshero Estate to the north, Ardverikie to the east and the A86 and Loch Laggan to the South. With the exception of Tulloch Estate, which no longer has any sheep, the neighbouring estates are all managed as traditional highland sporting estates generating income from stalking, sheep and forestry.

The Reserve is dominated by the 1,130 metre high Creag Meagaidh massif with its surrounding ridges and subsidiary peaks. In Coire Ardair, immense vertical cliffs plummet for 300 metres down to the dark waters of Lochan a' Choire, contrasting with the broad slopes of Moy Corrie to the west.



Map of Creag Meagaidh NNR



A SPECIAL PLACE

Part of the land which was to become Creag Meagaidh NNR was originally designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1964 for the geological interest in the area. A much larger area, almost 7,000 ha, was later designated a SSSI, following survey work which revealed the immense botanical interest of the area.

A striking feature of the Reserve is the unbroken succession of natural and semi-natural vegetation from the shores of Loch Laggan to the summit of Creag Meagaidh. Elsewhere in Glen Spean, and in much of the Highlands, the succession is usually broken by the presence of coniferous woodland. The summit plateau itself has one of the largest areas of *Racomitrium* (Woolly-fringe Moss) heath in the Highlands, a preferred breeding habitat for Dotterel.

Descending from the plateau the cliffs and scree slopes support a variety of rare plant communities with the most noteworthy being the Sub-arctic Willow scrub community. This is made up of a number of Willow species and would once have been widespread on



higher ground in Scotland. In the early years of the 21st Century however there is thought to be less than 10 ha left in the UK, mostly on ledges inaccessible to grazing sheep.

Below the montane habitat the lower ground contains fragments of ancient and long established semi-natural woodland. These are the last survivors in the area of woodland which was once present on the slopes of all the mountains from Atlantic to North Sea.

Encouraging the regeneration of those woods along with their associated flora and fauna is one of the main management objectives at Creag Meagaidh.

CHANGING TIMES

In 1983, Loch Laggan Estates sold the land which was to become Creag Meagaidh NNR to Fountain Forestry who proposed to plant a large area of the SSSI with Sitka Spruce. This proposal was opposed by conservation and recreational interests and was ultimately referred to the then Secretary of State, George Younger. The eventual decision was to allow Fountain to plant half the area they had originally planned for. This was not considered to be a viable proposition and after further discussions Fountain Forestry agreed to sell the estate to the Nature Conservancy Council (Scottish Natural Heritage's predecessor) in 1985. The estate was officially designated the Creag Meagaidh National Nature Reserve in May 1986 – and was the beginning of a new era.



SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION – THE BACKGROUND

WHAT ARE SNH TRYING TO DO?

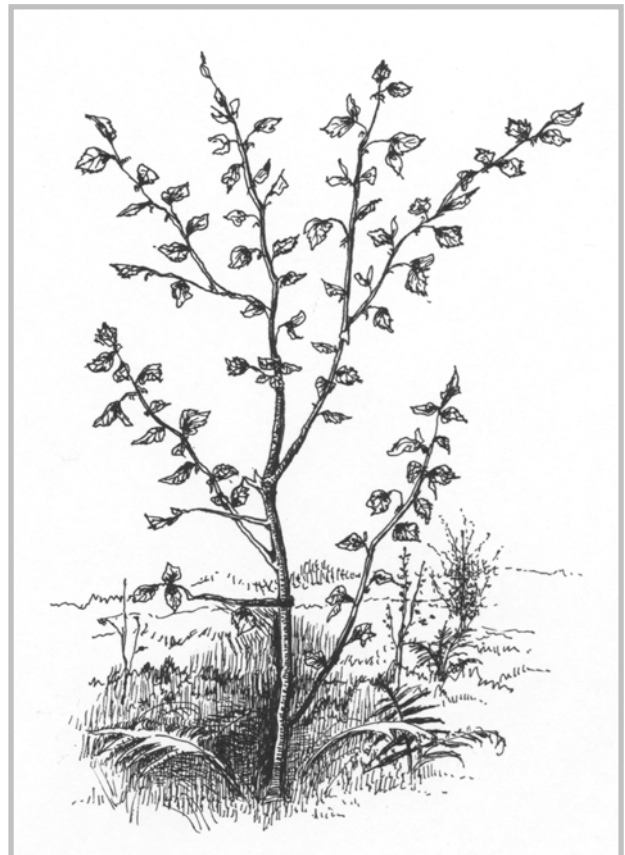
The long term aims of SNH management at Creag Meagaidh are two-fold:

- A To secure the conservation and enhancement of the Natural Heritage between loch shore and the summit of Creag Meagaidh;
- B To promote public appreciation and enjoyment of the area consistent with the first aim and to promote the Reserve for demonstration purposes.

Stemming from these aims the following management objectives were adopted in 1995:

- 1 To protect the Reserve from influences which might damage the scientific interest;
- 2 To maintain the diversity of species and habitats and enhance those habitats that appear degraded - in particular the woodland and scrub elements;
- 3 To encourage the study of the NNR by continuing to develop a research, survey and monitoring programme;
- 4 To encourage use of the Reserve for education and demonstration purposes and improve interpretation by maintaining links with schools and developing an interpretive plan;
- 5 To encourage public appreciation of the Reserve, subject to objective 1 above, and to continue with provisions to facilitate an open access policy;
- 6 To protect as far as possible the present landscape character;
- 7 To manage the rest of the property outwith the NNR in accordance with good estate management and with a view to achieving the other Reserve objectives.

The Management Plan for Creag Meagaidh is reviewed every 5 years. The next plan, which will have a revised format involving wider consultation, is currently in the drafting process. However, it is likely that the new management objectives will continue to develop the established themes within a contemporary context.



Birch Seedling