

The Special Qualities of the Glen Strathfarrar National Scenic Area

- An archetypal Highland glen
- Ancient Caledonian pine forest amidst rocky slopes
- A sinuous, fast-moving river emerging out of a peaceful loch
- The contrasts in colour, light and views
- A sense of peace and tranquillity

Special Quality	Further information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>An archetypal Highland glen</i> 	
<p>This is an inspiring and invigorating landscape where many of the features considered as romantic and iconic of the Highlands are found within a small area: distant views of snow-capped mountains; rocky ridges and heather-clad slopes; a rock-bound loch and glen; a rushing river; dark Caledonian pinewoods and beautiful individual trees – and all without obvious intrusion of modern artefacts.</p>	<p>The NSA includes the eastern part of a long, linear glen stretching from high mountains in the west, eastwards to Strathglass and gentler hills.</p> <p>A combination of elements – river, a steep-sided glen, Caledonian forest reaching up the ridges to the skyline – gives an enclosed but wild and remote feel to the lower and middle glen (the NSA). This sense of enclosure in turn contrasts with Loch Beannacharan where the landscape opens to views of distant mountain peaks.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ancient Caledonian pine forest amidst rocky slopes</i> 	
<p>Ancient forests clothe the lower slopes of this narrow, rocky glen. Dark green pine woods are interspersed with stands of the lighter birch, and by glades of heather, bracken and grass. Deer can sometimes be glimpsed amongst the trees.</p> <p>Scattered, mature pine trees hold the eye as they venture far up the sides of the glen, rising out of the rocks and heather. With their great size, orange bark, wide, spreading branches and their horizontal crowns, they add to the air of antiquity and timelessness of this glen.</p>	<p>There are extensive fragments of Caledonian forest. Although dominated by Scots pine, they include stands of birch and oak. Open areas and glades are variously dominated by heather, blaeberry, bracken or acid grassland.</p> <p>In addition there are single or small groups of mature trees, especially Scots pine ('granny' pines); some are distant from the main forest blocks and are a prominent landscape feature where they arise out of the rocks and heather.</p> <p>There has been management of this forest both in the past and in modern times. Recent management has been to encourage regeneration, particularly through fenced enclosures to exclude deer; these are not prominent and the woods have a natural appearance.</p> <p>Although well camouflaged in the heather, red deer are often visible, the stags sometimes seen standing proud on the promontories.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A sinuous, fast-moving river emerging out of a peaceful loch</i> 	
<p>The River Farrar, a winding and sinuous river, full of interest and variety, roars down the glen, finally plunging over the Culligran Falls into the lower strath.</p> <p>At the western end of the NSA, the still</p>	<p>Areas of rapids, riffles, falls and pools, a rocky river bed with boulders, rocky banks and cliffs create a constantly changing scene.</p>

waters of Loch Beannacharan offer a tranquil contrast.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The contrasts in colour, light and views</i> 	
<p>Pattern and colour vary constantly as one moves through the glen, brought about by the interplay of forest, clearing, river, loch and mountain.</p> <p>Views vary from the intimate to the extensive: one minute a rock-bound river framed by a canopy of trees, the next a distant, snow-bound peak reflected in the calm waters of a loch.</p>	<p>The wide variety of visual experience possible here relates to the mosaic of landscape elements found along the glen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interplay of the evergreen canopy of the pine and the fox-brown colours of the mature pine bark. • The orange, browns and purples of bracken and heather. • The muted greens of grassland clearings. • The deciduous trees with their seasonal changes. • The ever-changing light on the loch, and on the river, depending on its speed. • The emerging view of distant peaks travelling up the glen or as the clouds break apart.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A sense of peace and tranquillity</i> 	
<p>With its extensive native woodland and moorland, its flowing river, its surrounding hills and general absence of artefacts, the glen has a natural and peaceful feel, an oasis from the modern world.</p>	<p>Although possessing an undeveloped feel, there are isolated estate buildings and houses, and screened works related to hydro-electric schemes (a dam and power station). Evidence of previous use is evident in the shooting estate around Benachran Lodge, abandoned farmsteads on the lochside, and the prehistoric site of Culligran Dun. A single-track, tarred road and power lines traverse the length of the NSA.</p>

Selected Bibliography

Richards, J. 1999. Inverness District Landscape Character Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review*, No. 114.

Scottish Natural Heritage 1995. *Glen Strathfarrar*. National Nature Reserve booklet [note the glen is no longer an NNR].

Thomson, I. 1983. *Isolation Shepherd*. Inverness: Bidean Books.