

CITATION

LOWER FINDHORN WOODS SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST Moray

Site code: 1104

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NJ002522

OS 1: 50 000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 27
1: 25 000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 423, 422 & 419

AREA: 181.4 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological	:	Woodlands	:	Upland oak woodland
			:	Upland mixed ash woodland
			:	Wet woodland
	:	Freshwater habitats	:	Oligotrophic river/stream
	:	Non-vascular plants	:	Bryophyte assemblage
			:	Lichen assemblage

DESCRIPTION

The Lower Findhorn Woods are located along the River Findhorn and its tributaries, the River Divie and Dunearn Burn, between 3 and 16 km upstream of Forres. The rivers flow through deep gorges, cloaked in ancient and long-established semi-natural woodland with various open rock outcrops and river banks.

The range of woodland types which occur is outstanding for north-east Scotland. Oak and birch woodland, locally with hazel or juniper, is extensive on the valley slopes and reaches the lip of the gorge in places. The influence of base flushing in midslope gives rise to ash woodland with wych elm, gean, rowan, and bird cherry. Alder woodland is frequent on seepage zones, wetter slopes and along parts of the riverbank. Scots pine is also found.

The field-layer within the woodland is species-rich in places with several regionally or locally rare species such as bird's-nest orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*, wood fescue *Festuca altissima* and pale sedge *Carex pallescens*. The woodland lichen flora is well developed with one of the highest number of indicator species of old woodlands in eastern Scotland and the best example of the lichen community characterised by lungwort *Lobaria pulmonaria* in the north-east.

The site supports a total of 166 bryophyte species. The base-rich crags are the most important habitat for bryophytes with several rare liverwort species such as *Scapania praetervis*, *S. lingulata*, *Leiocolea heterocolpos* and *Jungermannia subelliptica*. These crags and rocks by the rivers and burns also supports oceanic bryophytes such as the moss *Isoetecium holtii* and the liverworts *Plagiochila killarniensis*, *P. spinulosa*, *S. gracilis* and *Bazzania trilobata*.

The River Findhorn itself is a good example of an oligotrophic spating river with a diversity of substrates and habitats and rich aquatic communities. Two rare river lichens are found: the river jelly lichen *Collema dichotomum* and *Dermatocarpon meiophyllizum*. The locally rare rough horsetail *Equisetum hyemale* is also found.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

Part notified under the 1949 Act: 1965 & 1974 (Cothall Quarries SSSI).

First notified under the 1981 Act: 11 September 1986.

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 16 June 2011.

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 179.06 ha).

Lower Findhorn Woods SSSI is designated as Lower Findhorn Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), for the European habitat listed below:

Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes

Part of the Lower Findhorn Woods SSSI is also part of Darnaway and Lethen Forest Special Protection Area (SPA), which is designated for the following European bird species:

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*