

CITATION

**RHIDORROCH WOODS
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST**
Highland (Wester Ross)

Site code: 1347

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NH 187944 and NH 243932

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 20
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 436

AREA: 740.68 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological : Woodlands: Native pinewood
Upland birch woodland
Upland Habitats: Subalpine dry heath
Invertebrates: Beetle (*Microrhagus pygmaeus*)

DESCRIPTION

Rhidorroch Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies in Glen Achall, 4km east of Ullapool, Wester Ross. This is a two part site. The site contains three nationally important habitats: native pinewood, upland birch woodland and subalpine dry heath, as well as the nationally rare false click beetle *Dirhagus pygmaeus*.

Native pinewood

This site has a nationally important fragment of the ancient native Scots pine forests of *Pinus sylvestris* var. *scotica* which are found only in the Highland and Grampian regions of Scotland. Seven genetically distinct regions of Scots pine have been identified in Scotland. Rhidorroch Woods SSSI has the largest stand of Scots Pine in the Northern region. These woods are typical of Scots pinewoods in the north west highlands, with a ground flora of abundant tall tussocky heather *Calluna vulgaris*, blaeberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* and Sphagnum moss *Sphagnum capillifolium*. They also support uncommon pinewood species such as creeping lady's tresses orchid, *Goodyera repens*.

Upland birch woodland

Birch-dominated woodlands occur throughout the site, supporting a range of native tree species including rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, wych-elm *Ulmus glabra*, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, aspen *Populus tremula* and alder *Alnus glutinosa*. The ground flora includes several uncommon species indicative of long-established ancient woodland: serrated wintergreen *Orthilia secunda*, chickweed wintergreen *Trientalis europaea* and wood vetch *Vicia sylvatica*.

Dry heath

The woodlands are interspersed with a mosaic of other vegetation communities including subalpine dry heath. The subalpine dry heath habitat on this site is well-developed on the steep, well-drained south-west facing slopes on the north side of Glen Achall. Here the heath is dominated by dense heather *Calluna vulgaris* with

abundant bell heather *Erica cinerea* and some blaeberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*. Extensive moss carpets support species including Stair step moss *Hylocomium splendens* and Heath plait-moss *Hypnum jutlandicum*. The south-facing slope of Creag Ghrianach holds an excellent example of dry heath, dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris* and bearberry *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*.

False click beetle *Microrhagus pygmaeus*

Rhidorroch Woods SSSI is the only known Scottish site for the nationally rare false click beetle *Microrhagus pygmaeus*. This species occurs mainly in ancient broad-leaved woodland and is dependant on the availability of fallen and standing deadwood to complete its life-cycle.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1981 Act: 28 March 1989

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 15 July 2010

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 741.8 ha)

Rhidorroch Woods SSSI is also designated as Rhidorroch Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for the European habitats listed below.

Habitat : Caledonian forest
: Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath