

CITATION

BEINN A' GHLO
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST
Perth and Kinross

Site code: 161

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NN 958726

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 43
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 386, 387, 394

AREA: 8084.76 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES:

Biological: Woodlands: Upland birch woodland
Upland habitats: Upland assemblage
Non-vascular plants: Bryophyte assemblage
Vascular plants: Vascular plant assemblage
Birds: Breeding bird assemblage

Geological: Structural and metamorphic geology: Dalradian
Igneous petrology: Caledonian igneous

DESCRIPTION:

The Beinn a' Ghlo massif is an extensive upland area to the north-east of Blair Atholl. The mountain is important as it forms part of the series of arctic-alpine sites on calcareous Dalradian schist which lies across the southern Grampians; these sites are amongst the richest botanical montane sites in Britain. The combination of high-altitude, late-lying snow, relatively continental climate and lime-rich rocks has led to the formation of a well developed and wide range of alpine flora. Beinn a' Ghlo is important for its nationally important assemblages of upland habitats, rare plants, breeding birds and geology.

Beinn a' Ghlo is the largest of the sites on the Dalradian limestone in the area. The assemblage of upland habitats is of outstanding importance on account of its limestone grassland, cliff, flush, wooded gorge and limestone pavement vegetation, all of which are rare in Scotland and contain many nationally rare and scarce species of vascular plants and bryophytes.

The northern part of the site in particular is of major bryological importance with a mixture of montane and lowland species including several rarities. Overall the vegetation of the site is particularly diverse with a range of Central Highland montane communities on the higher parts of the site, in addition to the limestone communities.

The wooded gorge near Fealar Lodge is a remnant of what was once a much more extensive upland birch woodland. This woodland is unusual, and only near Braemar does similarly rich woodland occur at such an altitude.

Beinn a' Ghlo is also of importance for the diversity of the breeding bird community which includes several rare upland and northern species, including dotterel and golden eagle.

The area along the River Tilt from Gilbert's Bridge to Gaw's Bridge is a classic section through the junction between two major divisions of the 800-500 million year old Dalradian Supergroup: the Grampian Group and the Appin Group. The western part of this area lies in the Beinn a' Ghlo SSSI and contains one of the key exposures of the junction at Coille Sron an Duine. Here 'Glen Banvie series' rocks lie in contact with older Grampian Group rocks. The boundary here is a zone of strain that has been referred to as a 'Boundary Slide'. The site is potentially key to evaluating the age and importance of the Boundary Slide, and to clarifying the nature of the Glen Banvie series rocks and their relationship to Appin Group rocks elsewhere in the area.

The area along the River Tilt from Forest Lodge northwards for just under 1 km, is of international importance as it was here, in 1785, that James Hutton first found and documented field evidence to support his theory that granite was intruded into country rock in a hot, fluid state.

The country rock is Dalradian rock of the Appin Group (~700 million years old) adjacent to the Loch Tay Fault (also exposed in the site). The igneous intrusions are granite and also diorite associated with the late stages of the Caledonian orogeny (mountain building event around 460-430 million years ago).

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949: 1972
A small area was also notified in 1955 as Glen Tilt SSSI

Re-notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981: 15 December 1983

Reviewed under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004: 19 March 2010

REMARKS

Measured area of SSSI corrected (from 7933 ha).

Beinn a' Ghlo SSSI is coincident with the Beinn a' Ghlo Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is designated for the European habitats and species listed below:

Habitats

- Acidic scree
- Alpine and subalpine heaths
- Base-rich fens
- Blanket bog
- Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone
- Dry heaths
- Hard water springs depositing lime
- High-altitude plant communities associated with areas of water seepage
- Montane acid grasslands
- Plants in crevices on acid rocks
- Plants in crevices on base-rich rocks
- Species-rich grassland with mat-grass in upland areas

Species

- Geyer's whorl snail (*Vertigo geyeri*)
- Round-mouthed whorl snail (*Vertigo genesii*)

Part of the SSSI overlaps with part of the River Tay Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is designated for the European habitats and species listed below:

Habitats: Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels

Species: Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*
Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*
River lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*
Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*
Otter *Lutra lutra*