

## CITATION

### LOCH ALINE SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST Highland (Lochaber)

Site code: 1653

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NM 695460

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 49  
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 383

AREA: 85.78 ha

#### NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES:

<b>Geological</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Stratigraphy</b>	<b>Hettangian, Sinemurian, Pliensbachian</b>
<b>Biological</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Woodlands</b>	<b>Upland mixed ash woodland</b>
	<b>:</b>	<b>Non-vascular plants</b>	<b>Bryophyte assemblage</b>

#### DESCRIPTION:

Loch Aline Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) extends along the eastern flank of Loch Aline, Morvern, and encompasses an area of mixed broad-leaved woodland on predominantly base rich soils. The site has a north westerly aspect and extends from near sea level up to an altitude of around 150 metres, rising up through moderate to steep slopes with rocky gorges. The underlying rocks are predominantly Jurassic sediments.

The Allt Leacach, towards the southern end of the SSSI, exhibits the finest and most representative geological section of the Blue Lias Formation in the western Highlands. Comprising alternations of limestone and mudstone, the sequence dates from the Hettangian and part of the Sinemurian stages of the Lower Jurassic geological period, spanning a period of time between 200 and 194 million years ago. Whilst remarkably similar to Lias rocks in southern England, the rock sequence in the Allt Leacach Burn is markedly different from other Lower Jurassic sites in the Hebrides, this is of major importance in understanding the geography of Jurassic Britain.

The Loch Aline SSSI woodlands have developed on predominantly base rich soils where they represent upland mixed ash woodland and are dominated by ash, with wych elm, hazel, bird cherry, holly, and rowan, except in the wetter areas towards the base of the slopes where alder dominates and on the plateau above the slopes where the soil conditions are more acidic and oak *Quercus spp.* and birch *Betula spp.* become more prominent. The woodland ground flora is very rich and is composed primarily of grasses, herbs and ferns, together with a diverse range of woodland calcicoles. Amongst the grasses are wood millet, wood melick, mountain melick, and wood false brome. The herbs include sanicle, wild garlic, dog's mercury, and enchanter's nightshade. The epiphytic lichen flora of the ash wood contains species of restricted distribution in the UK. In the steep rocky stream gorges, wych elm is the dominant tree and ferns such as the soft and hard shield ferns, hart's tongue and Wilson's filmy fern are found. At the top of the slope, cliff ledges allow species intolerant of grazing to survive, including the common and serrated wintergreens.

The Loch Aline woodlands are some of the best woods in Lochaber for calcicole bryophytes and good assemblages of Atlantic bryophyte species are found in the humid conditions provided by the steep rocky gorges. The bryophyte flora includes seven Nationally Scarce species, for example *Ulota calvescens*, *Calypogeia suecica* and *Radula aquilegia*, and nine that are considered strictly Atlantic. There are also a number of sub-Atlantic and western British bryophytes present.

**NOTIFICATION HISTORY:**

First notified under the 1949 Act: 1981

Re-notified under the 1981 Act: 18 September 2000 with 60.22 ha decrease in area

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 27 February 2009

**REMARKS:**

Loch Aline SSSI is part of Morvern Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for the European habitats and species listed below.

Habitats:       Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes  
                  Western acidic oak woodland

Species:        Otter *Lutra lutra*