

## CITATION

**CAIRNWELL**  
**SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST**  
Aberdeenshire and Perth & Kinross

Site code: 291

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NO126781

AREA: 23.0 hectares

O.S. 1: 50 000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 43  
1: 25 000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 387

## NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological : Uplands : Alpine calcareous grassland  
: Vascular plants : Vascular plant assemblage

## DESCRIPTION

This site is located to the north-west of the Cairnwell (933 m), about 14 km south of Braemar. It is one of a series of Dalradian limestone sites in Aberdeenshire and is of particular importance on account of its alpine calcareous grassland associated with outcrops of sugar limestone, which are uncommon in Britain. Although these outcrops are limited in extent, the patches of grassland, and associated springs and flushes, support a large number of rare vascular plants.

### Alpine calcareous grassland

The calcareous grassland is mainly characterised by sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, and wild thyme *Thymus polytrichus* with patches of mountain avens *Dryas octopetala* and mountain crowberry *Empetrum nigrum* subspecies *hermaphroditum*.

### Vascular plants

Rare vascular plants found include alpine milk vetch *Astragalus alpinus*, alpine sandwort *Minuartia rubella*, rock sedge *Carex rupestris*, alpine pearlwort *Sagina saginoides*, alpine cinquefoil *Potentilla crantzii*, spring sandwort *Minartia verna*, least cinquefoil *Sibbaldia procumbens*, alpine speedwell *Veronica alpina*, shady horsetail *Equisetum pratense*, hair sedge *Carex capillaris*, the eyebright *Euphrasia frigida* and the lady's mantle *Alchemilla wichurae*.

## NOTIFICATION HISTORY

Notified under the 1949 Act: 1972.  
Notified under the 1981 Act in 19 April 1985, with a net decrease of 4.18 ha.  
Reviewed under the 2004 Act: 2 June 2011.

## REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 24.15 ha).

Cairnwell is part of the Cairngorms Massif Special Protection Area (SPA), which is designated for golden eagle.