

CITATION

CAWDOR WOOD SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST HIGHLAND (Nairn)

Site code: 349

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NH 848489
OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 27
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 422
AREA: 161.6 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological

Woodlands: Upland oak woodland

Non-vascular plants: Lichen assemblage

DESCRIPTION

Cawdor Wood is located 7km southwest of Nairn and is considered to be one of the finest broadleaf woodlands in northeast Scotland. It is outstanding for its relatively large area of ancient oakwood and for its lichen flora.

The area has been modified by glacial action and deposition and the resulting undulating ground has developed deep, brown forest soils which vary in the amounts of sands, gravels and humus present. Tributaries of the Cawdor Burn have cut deep gorges through rocks of the Moine schist and middle Old Red Sandstone. The wood ranges in elevation from 60m to 175m above sea level.

Woodland

Records show that the site has a long history as woodland, probably dating back to the time before the major forest clearances in Scotland. It is likely that the site originally consisted mainly of sessile oak *Quercus petraea*. Both pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and sessile oak have been planted in the site. Woodland of ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and wych elm *Ulmus glabra* has developed in the gorges, whilst elsewhere within the wood there are stands of oak and Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*, and oak and beech *Fagus sylvatica*.

Lichens

Cawdor Wood is one of only a few ancient woods remaining in Britain which has a relatively dry continental climate and which are located in areas where there is no significant air pollution.

The wood is of international importance for lichens with over 244 species recorded including 6 nationally rare and 28 nationally scarce species. The oak woodland contains high populations of many noteworthy species especially those associated

with dry bark conditions. Of these species, three (*Buellia violaceofusca*, *Lecanactis amyloacea* and *Schismatomma graphidioides*) are particularly well represented here. The two gorges contain *Lobarion* and *Graphidion* communities which are very local in eastern Scotland.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1981 Act: 29 July 1988

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 10 February 2009

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected from 159.4 ha

Cawdor Wood SSSI is also Cawdor Wood Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for the European habitat listed below:

Habitat: Western acidic oak woodland