

CITATION

ALLT NAN CAORACH SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST HIGHLAND (Easter Ross and Cromarty)

Site code: 46

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NH 514676 – NH 557680

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 20 and 21
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 437

AREA: 57.65 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological: Woodlands: Upland birch woodland
Biological: Upland habitats: Subalpine dry heath

DESCRIPTION

The Allt nan Caorach burn originates on the eastern flank of the Ben Wyvis massif and flows eastwards to join the River Glass. The site is focussed on an incised gorge which has cut through different rock types and boulder clays resulting in a wide range of soil conditions. This is the only site in East Ross and Cromarty which shows the transition from valley woodlands through upland birch woods to the upland vegetation of Ben Wyvis.

The lowest section of the gorge, close to its confluence with the River Glass, is dominated by a range of deciduous trees including wych elm, oak and downy birch. At higher altitudes Scots pine becomes increasingly common although birch is still the dominant tree. On rocky bluffs above the river there are stands of aspen, juniper and on richer soils, hazel. Much of the site is steep sided and the ground flora is very diverse and reflects the range of soil conditions. Notable species include wood fescue *Festuca altissima*, wood vetch *Vicia sylvatica*, intermediate wintergreen *Pyrola media* and serrated wintergreen *Orthilia secunda*.

In the upper, more open parts of the gorge, particularly on the drier boulder clay banks, a range of sub alpine heath communities have developed. These are dominated by dwarf-shrubs including heather *Calluna vulgaris*, bearberry *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* and cowberry *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* with less frequent cross leaved heath *Erica cinerea* and petty whin *Genista anglica*. Vascular plants such as common wintergreen *Pyrola minor*, slender St John's-wort *Hypericum pulchrum*, bitter vetch *Lathyrus linilolius* are present.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1949 Act: 1978. The lower part of this site was first notified for geological interest only, as part of Glen Glass Landforms SSSI which was denotified on 13 December 1984.

Re-notified under the 1981 Act: 13 December 1984

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 19 February 2009

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected from 68.4 ha.