

## CITATION

**KNAPDALE WOODS**  
**SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST**  
Argyll and Bute

Site code: 8158

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE:      NR 755875 (Faery Isles)  
   NR 778889 (Strone Woods)  
   NR 765870 (Barr Mor)  
   NR 782900 (Loch Coille-Bharr)  
   NR 795915 (Barnluasgan)

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO:              Landranger Series 55  
   1:25,000 SHEET NO:              Explorer Series 358

AREA:                                      586.85 ha

## NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

<b>Biological:</b>	<b>Woodlands:</b>	<b>Upland oak woodland</b>
<b>Biological:</b>	<b>Freshwater habitats:</b>	<b>Loch trophic range</b>
<b>Biological:</b>	<b>Non-vascular plants:</b>	<b>Bryophyte assemblage</b>
<b>Biological:</b>	<b>Non-vascular plants:</b>	<b>Lichen assemblage</b>
<b>Biological:</b>	<b>Dragonflies:</b>	<b>Dragonfly assemblage</b>
<b>Biological:</b>	<b>Birds:</b>	<b>Breeding bird assemblage</b>

## DESCRIPTION

Knapdale Woods Special Site of Scientific Information (SSSI) comprises a contiguous group of 5 woodland areas and 7 lochs in the Knapdale Forest area 6 km west of Lochgilphead. The site is notified for its oak woodland habitats, lichens, bryophytes, freshwater habitats, dragonflies and breeding woodland bird assemblages.

The landform of west Knapdale is unique, being deeply indented with sea lochs lying more or less parallel to each other in a north-eastern to south-western alignment. Consequently the physiography of this area is marked by a series of parallel ridges or 'knaps' separated by narrow glens or 'dales'. The ridges are steep sided. The effect of this formation provides sudden and striking changes to micro-climate, drainage and soil condition over short east-west distances.

### **Woodland**

The site supports a nationally-important network of woodland compartments that are composed predominantly of sessile oak *Quercus petraea* and downy birch *Betula pubescens* that support rich communities of lower plants. Over half of the woodland is of ancient semi-natural origin with a history of coppicing. The lochs are fringed with pockets of alder *Alnus glutinosa* and tussock sedge *Carex* sp. woodland. There are smaller areas of damp downy birch and purple moor-grass *Molina caerulea* woodland in the hollows, damp alder and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* with yellow pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum* woodland around the loch and stream edges, and also some areas of ash and rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* with dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* woodland on some of the drier slopes. On steep rocky slopes

at the Faery Isle there is a population of aspen *Populus tremula*. The nationally-scarce narrow-leaved hellorborine *Cephalanthera longifolia* has also been recorded on the site.

### **Loch Trophic Range**

The seven lochs and lochans are oligotrophic or mesotrophic and are generally steep sided with a coarse substrate. Each of the lochs has a rich assemblage of pondweed *Potamogeton* species including the near threatened long-stalked pondweed *P. praelongus* and the nationally-scarce long-leaved pondweed *P. x zizii*.

Loch Coille-Bharr and Loch Barnluasgan are mesotrophic and lowland in type and more alkaline than most lochs in this region. The vegetation is sparse in this loch but there is a rich diversity of species including 33 aquatic plants and 7 species of pondweed including *P. praelongus* and *x P. zizii*.

Loch Linne and Loch Fidhle are oligotrophic. These lochs support extensive colonies of white water-lily *Nymphaea alba* with yellow water-lily *Nuphar lutea*, the nationally-scarce least water-lily *Nuphar pumila* and both *P. praelongus* and *x P. zizii*. Loch nà Creige Mòire also has a large population of shoreweed *Littorella uniflora*, water lobelia *Lobelia dortmanna* and quillwort *Isoetes lacustris* in addition to those species listed above.

### **Bryophyte assemblage**

The larger woodland compartments support an extensive community of oceanic woodland bryophytes with an assemblage of Atlantic species with two nationally-scarce liverworts, deceptive featherwort *Adelanthus decipiens* and western featherwort *Plagiochila heterophylla*. The bryophyte and lichen assemblages are sheltered by the block scree, broken crags, woodland cover, and low ridges. Rainfall throughout the year supports these populations. In the block scree is a widespread community of the slender mouse-tail moss *Isoetecium myosuroides* and white earwort *Diplophyllum albicans* community but more important is the extent of the western earwort *Scapania gracilis*, prickly featherwort *Plagiochila spinulosa* and Wilson's filmy-fern *Hymenophyllum wilsonii* community. Within this community are stands of western and deceptive featherwort and spotty featherwort *Plagiochila punctata* and, on the most humid and acidic rocks, greater whipwort *Bazzania trilobata*, rock fingerwort *Lepidozia cupressina* and Scott's fork-moss *Dicranum scottianum*. On the more basic rocks short-beaked wood-moss *Hylocomium brevirostre* is often overwhelmingly abundant, sometimes with fox-tail feather-moss *Thamnobryum alopecurum* on steeper, more sheltered faces. Calcicole bryophytes occurring here include bitter scalewort *Porella arboris-vitae*, rambling tail-moss *Anomodon viticulosus*, bird's-foot wing-moss *Pterogonium gracile*, beech feather-moss *Eurhynchium crassinervium* and there are relatively frequent stands of the Atlantic liverwort *Plagiochila bifaria* and MacKay's pouncewort *Marchesinia mackaii*.

On tree bases the bryophytes are usually similar to those on the rocks, with an abundance of slender mouse-tail moss *I. myosuroides* and frequent patches of western earwort *S. gracilis* and prickly featherwort *P. spinulosa* in the humid areas. In the more humid areas spotty featherwort *P. punctata* can be abundant, particularly on the older birches and alder. There is a more diverse flora on the ash, hazel *Corylus avellana* and wych elm *Ulmus glabra*.

This community of more basic rocks is best developed on the Faery Isles but other limited areas occur at Strone and Barr Mor. Of interest are the stands of frizzled crisp-moss *Tortella tortuosa*, rough earwort *Scapania aspera*, long-shanked pincushion *Ptychomitrium polyphyllum*, the moss *Cinclidotus fontinaloides* and an array of moss species of the hair-pointed grimmia *Grimmia trichophylla* group.

### Lichen Assemblage

Lichen assemblages of international and national importance occur within the wide range of habitats and topographical features which make up Knapdale Woods SSSI. In 2010, over 440 lichen taxa were recorded, with 10 nationally-rare species including *Bactrospora dryina* (Red Data Book (RDB) critically-endangered), and 17 species listed as RDB near-threatened. The presence of 40 lichenicolous fungi further emphasises the biodiversity importance of the site, these fungi being numerous only within old, long-established and species-rich lichen communities. There are 67 lichen taxa of international-responsibility, mostly indicative of the well-developed *Lobarion* community, which includes all four British species of the genus *Lobaria*, as well as four species of *Pseudocyphellaria*, including *P. lacerata* (RDB vulnerable) and *P. norvegica* (BAP species). The *Lobarion* community generally is well represented, and in healthy, viable populations. Around the Faery Isles and Port Lunna, this community is richly developed in characteristic habitat features for this part of Knapdale. These habitats are under dappled tree canopy on sheltered base-rich rocks above the coast in sheltered inlets. The more exposed rocky ridges with oak and birch as are found above Port Lunna, between Loch Barnluasgan and Loch Linne, and around Loch Coille-Bharr, support notable assemblages of the *Parmelietum laevigatae*. The sheltered, humid Atlantic hazelwoods of Barnluasgan are important for luxuriant *Lobarion* lichens, together with a nationally-important smooth-bark community of the *Graphidion* on hazel, rowan and holly. Rocks and boulders within the SSSI are an integral part of the overall habitat, and lichens on mossy rocks contribute to the overall species diversity.

### Dragonflies

The site supports a dragonfly assemblage of ten species: the nationally-scarce hairy dragonfly *Brachytron pratense*, highland darter *Sympetrum nigrescens*, black darter *S. danae*, golden-ringed dragonfly *Cordulegaster boltonii*, four-spotted chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*, large red damselfly *Pyrrosoma nymphula* emerald damselfly *Lestes sponsa*, blue-tailed damselfly *Ischnura elegans*, common blue damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum*, and azure damselfly *Coenagrion puella*.

### Breeding Birds

The site supports a good assemblage of woodland breeding bird species including; siskin *Carduelis spinus*, woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*, tawny owl *Strix aluco*, common crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*, redpoll *Carduelis* sp. as well as osprey *Pandion haliaetus*.

## NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1981 Act: 25 April 2001.

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: - **28 February 2011**

## REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 585 ha)

Knapdale Woods SSSI is linked to both Moine Mhor SSSI and Taynish Wood SSSI.

All of Knapdale Woods SSSI is part of the Taynish and Knapdale Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which is designated for the European habitats and species listed below.

- Habitats : Western acidic oak woodland
- : Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels
- Species : Marsh fritillary butterfly (*Euphydryas aurinia*)
- : Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

