

# SOUTH PERTSHIRE DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

## **DESIGNATED SITES**

### **Appendix 3**

This document has been compiled by:

Jos Milner, Wildlife Ecologist MCIEEM  
Balhallach, Girnoc, Ballater  
AB35 5SR

Tel: (013397) 53854 Email: [jos.milner@gmail.com](mailto:jos.milner@gmail.com)

## THE DESIGNATED SITES IN THE SOUTH PERTSHIRE DMG AREA

Within the DMG area there are five different types of designation:

*National Park*

*National Scenic Area (NSA)*

*Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)*

*Special Area of Conservation (SAC)*

### **National Scenic Area (NSA)**

National Scenic Areas are Scotland's only national landscape designation. They are those areas of land considered of national significance on the basis of their outstanding scenic interest which must be conserved as part of the country's natural heritage. They have been selected for their characteristic features of scenery comprising a mixture of richly diverse landscapes including prominent landforms, coastline, sea and freshwater lochs, rivers, woodlands and moorlands.

There are currently 40 NSAs in Scotland, covering a total land area of 1,020,500 ha and a marine area of 357,900 ha.

### **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**

Sites of Special Scientific Interest represent the best of Scotland's natural heritage. They are 'special' for their plants, animals or habitats, their rocks or landforms, or a combination of such natural features. Together, they form a network of the best examples of natural features throughout Scotland, and support a wider network across Great Britain and the European Union.

Scottish Natural Heritage chooses sites after detailed survey and evaluation against published scientific criteria. SSSIs can include freshwater and sea water, down to the mean low water mark of spring tides, as well as land. At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008, there were 1,456 SSSIs, covering a total area of 1,036,000 hectares or 12.9% of Scotland.

SNH designates SSSIs to protect the best of our natural heritage by making sure that decision-makers, managers of land and their advisors, as well as the planning authorities and other public bodies, are aware of them when considering changes in land-use or other activities which might affect them.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 provides the legislative framework around which all SSSI sites are administered.

### **Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**

Special Areas of Conservation are areas designated under the European Directive commonly known as the 'Habitats Directive'. Together with Special Protection Areas, which are designated under the Wild Birds Directive for wild birds and their habitats, SACs form the Natura 2000 network of sites. Most SACs on land or freshwater in Scotland are also underpinned by notification as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The additional SAC designation is recognition that some or all of the wildlife and habitats are particularly valued in a European context.

Within the South Perthshire Deer Management Group there are:

14 X Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) which fall partly or totally within the DMG, or just outside. In total, 2143 ha of land within the DMG is covered by SSSI designation, equivalent to 2.4 % of the DMG area. Of these 14 SSSIs, 5 are currently assessed as being in broadly unfavourable condition, 3 are in recovering condition and 6 are in favourable condition. In terms of broad area, 1,827 ha or 87 % of the total SSSI area is in Favourable condition, although this is heavily influenced by one very large upland site, Ben Chonzie, 90 ha or 4 % is in Recovering Condition and 233 ha or 11 % is in Unfavourable condition

Overlapping some of the SSSIs and South Perthshire DMG area are:

- Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park (LLTNP): The National Park has an area of 1,865 km<sup>2</sup> of which 28 km<sup>2</sup> or 1.5% falls within the area of South Perthshire DMG. This covers approx 4% of the area of the Group.
- Two National Scenic Areas (NSA): River Earn (Comrie to St. Fillans) NSA and River Tay (Dunkeld) NSA. Together these NSAs cover a total area of 8,816 ha, of which 2,731 ha fall within the boundary of South Perthshire DMG, equivalent to 3.1 % of the DMG area.
- Two Special Areas of Conservation (SAC): the River Tay SAC and Upper Strathearn Woodlands SAC. Both overlap an SSSI within South Perthshire DMG area and extend beyond its boundaries but a total of 152 ha of land is designated as SAC within the DMG, equivalent to 0.2 % of the area. In addition, approx 40 km of watercourses are also designated as part of the River Tay SAC.

Listed below is a summary of the individual designated sites within the area, in alphabetical order. All those sites with an SSSI designation are listed first, followed by sites carrying other designations only.

### **Balnaguard Glen SSSI – Favourable**

Deer Management Unit: 41 Kinnaird

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=139](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=139)

Balnaguard Glen SSSI is on the north east facing slopes above Balnaguard village, east of Aberfeldy. The site is 58.5 ha but only 3 ha of this lies within South Perthshire DMG area. It has been designated for its juniper scrub woodland, a nationally rare and declining habitat. Balnaguard Glen SSSI contains an extensive area of juniper along with birch woodland and mixed deciduous woodland in deep gorge cut by Balnaguard Burn. The site is notable for the regeneration of juniper on the eroding slopes above Balnaguard Burn. On gentler slopes to the west side of the Burn, the juniper shows a wide range of growth forms. When assessed in 2012 this feature was found to be in favourable condition.

The mixed deciduous woodland has hazel, rowan and willow, as well as a rich and varied ground flora which includes a number of locally uncommon plant species like wintergreens, sanicle, moonwort and alpine bistort in the gorge. The site is also noted for its insect populations, which include a number of rare flies, butterflies (including pearl-bordered fritillary) and moths. Deer use the woodlands for shelter and the ground flora is grazed. Scottish Wildlife Trust have erected small experimental exclusion plots to investigate the regeneration of juniper and deer grazing pressure on heathland areas.

**Ben Chonzie SSSI – Favourable**

Deer Management Units: 15 Auchnafree South, 17 Fordie, 18 Carroglen, 23 Invergeldie, 28 Glenturret

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=178](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=178)

Ben Chonzie SSSI lies at the head of Glen Turret, to the north of Comrie and north-west of Crieff. It is a 1642 ha upland site around the mountain of the same name, which has a summit of 913 m. The site has been designated for its montane breeding birds and extensive range of upland and montane habitats including tall-herb communities on cliffs, blanket bog, heaths and small wetlands, as well as rare flowering plant species.

The breeding bird assemblage on Ben Chonzie includes ptarmigan on higher ground, the waders dunlin and golden plover, ring ouzels on crags and red grouse and meadow pipit on the extensive moorlands. Peregrine, short-eared owl, raven and golden eagle have bred on the site and dotterel have been recorded on the site. The bird assemblage is considered to be in favourable condition.

The rare higher plants and tall-herb communities occur primarily close to rock outcrops and on cliffs in upper Glen Turret and are associated with highly fertile, calcium-rich soils and underlying rocks. In addition, a single large colony of the rare mountain milkvetch is present on an outcrop of acidic rock. The site also has colonies of several uncommon mosses. The site was last monitored in 2006 & found to be in favourable condition.

**Birks of Aberfeldy SSSI – Unfavourable (lichens – favourable)**

Deer Management Unit: n/a

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=208](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=208)

The Birks of Aberfeldy SSSI is a mixed woodland along the gorge of the Moness Burn, a tributary of the River Tay at Aberfeldy. The site is 45 ha and was designated for its ash woodland and lichen interest in the gorge. Below the Falls of Moness, the burn forms part of the River Tay Special Area of Conservation for Atlantic salmon, otter, brook lamprey, sea lamprey and river lamprey.

The mixed broad-leaved woodland is of ancient, semi-natural origin and is dominated by oak and birch in less fertile areas, alder and ash in wetter areas and beech with planted rhododendron in the lower sections. The ground flora is very varied with a large number of rare species, including small cow-wheat and lesser hairy brome. The humid conditions of the gorge mean that a large number of lichens also occur here, including a combination of oceanic and continental species and twenty two nationally scarce species.

The ash woodland was assessed in 2012 and found to be in unfavourable condition. Non-native species, especially beech and Norway spruce, are locally abundant and beech regeneration is an increasing problem. Bracken encroachment and browsing by roe deer are additional potential pressures on regeneration of native trees. The lichen assemblage was found to be in favourable condition when assessed in 2013.

This site lies just outwith the DMG boundary at present, but the owners, Perth & Kinross Council, have indicated a willingness to join the Group.

**Bolfracks Wood SSSI – Unfavourable**

Deer Management Unit: n/a

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=242](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=242)

Bolfracks Wood SSSI is a wet woodland site on a north-facing hillside above the River Tay and west of Aberfeldy. This 20 ha site has been designated because it is a good example of a nationally rare and threatened woodland type called slope alderwood which forms along spring lines and burns. The wood is classified as Ancient Woodland of semi-natural origin and has been a woodland since at least 1750.

The eastern half the woodland has a canopy dominated by ash and alder with a hazel understorey, while in the west there is an isolated stand of alder and birch woodland which acts as a buffer between the alderwood and surrounding conifer plantation. There is also a small stand of oak and the site and the ground flora is dominated by grass species. Although not a designated feature, the woodlands has a rich lichen flora.

When last monitored in 2000, the woodland was found to be in unfavourable condition due to a lack of tree regeneration in the birch-dominated part of the woodland. This was primarily due to encroachment by bracken which has also been suppressing the ground flora. Regeneration within the slope alderwood is adequate following the fencing out of deer and rabbits. Since then, a plan to control bracken as part of a wider woodland management contract with Bolfracks Estate should enable recovery of the woodland towards favourable condition.

This site lies just outwith the DMG boundary at present, and is deer fenced. It lies within a likely extension area for the DMG.

**Cambusurich Wood SSSI – Unfavourable (Upland mixed ash woodland – favourable)**

Deer Management Unit: 5 Cambusurich

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=305](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=305)

Cambusurich Wood SSSI is located on the steep slopes above Loch Tay, east of Killin. At 55 ha, it is the largest remaining stand of natural, undisturbed woodland along the southern shores of Loch Tay and is interesting for its variety of woodland types and the transitions between them. The SSSI overlaps the River Tay SAC, designated for Atlantic salmon, 3 species of lamprey, otter and clear-water lochs with poor to moderate nutrient content.

The designated woodland types within Cambusurich Wood SSSI are upland sessile oak woodland with downy birch and a hazel understory on drier acidic soils, upland mixed ash woodland with hazel on richer soils and wet woodland of alder and birch on wetter ground. The ash woodland has a rich ground flora which includes an extensive population of the locally rare chickweed wintergreen. Cambusurich Wood has a high degree of naturalness and appears substantially unmodified. Standing and fallen deadwood is also an important component of the site for fungi, lichens, mosses, birds and insects, including two fly species (fungus gnats) for which the site is also designated. However, when monitored in 2001, there was less deadwood than expected and consequently the fly assemblage was considered to be in unfavourable condition.

The wet woodland was assessed as being in unfavourable condition in 2008 due to lack of regeneration caused by sheep and potentially deer. The mixed ash woodland was found to be in favourable condition when monitored in 2008 but in 2014 the upland oak woods were in unfavourable condition. Some regeneration was occurring across the rest of the site, although deer and especially sheep were considered to be keeping this in check and are a potential pressure across all woodland types. Sitelink does suggest that the site is currently in recovering condition. SNH suggest that browsing pressure within this area is primarily down to sheep.

### **Comrie Woods SSSI - Unfavourable** **Part of Upper Strathearn Oakwoods SAC**

Deer Management Unit: 21 Dunira

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=396](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=396)

Comrie Woods SSSI lies just north of Comrie. The site has two neighbouring parts, one is Pollyrigg and Twenty Shilling Woods which lie to the west of Glen Lednock, the other is in the River Lednock valley. These are Ancient Woodlands of semi-natural origin and are of international importance so have been designated as part of the Upper Strathearn Oakwoods SAC.

At 89 ha, Comrie Woods SSSI is the largest areas of sessile oakwood in the region. It has a good diversity of woodland habitat types with some areas of valley alderwood and fragments of richer woodland, including ash, hazel, and wych elm, in the gorge adjacent to the River Lednock. In addition, the nationally scarce plant, Sword-leaved helleborine, has been recorded here and 9 locally uncommon plant species occur in the Lednock Gorge. The woods were found to be in unfavourable condition when assessed in 2009. This was due to prolific regeneration of non-native western hemlock in the Lednock section and a high level of grazing and browsing by deer and domestic stock in Pollyrigg Wood, which also impacted on regeneration of native trees. In addition, bracken may be inhibiting regeneration, particularly in Twenty Shilling and Pollyrigg Woods. Beech, which is not native to this area, is also present but along the road it is considered to have some amenity value. SNH suggest that the browsing pressure within the woodland area is primarily down to sheep.

### **Connachan Marsh SSSI - Unfavourable**

Deer Management Unit: 30 Connachan

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=398](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=398)

Connachan Marsh SSSI is located 6km northeast of Crieff, on a saddle on the Almond-Earn watershed. The 23 ha site is designated for its area of raised bog with peripheral lagg fen, a particularly rare habitat in Britain.

The raised bog is dominated by heather and common cotton-grass and supports extensive areas of Sphagnum moss, including *S. magellanicum*, a species that indicates a relatively undisturbed bog. The associated lagg fen is relatively calcareous, dominated by *Carex* sedges, but with a good variety of herbs. When assessed in 2008, the site was considered to be in unfavourable condition. A reduction in grazing by domestic stock, combined with a drying out of the bog through drainage has led to birch scrub colonizing part of the bog surface. The site therefore has little relevance to deer.

**Craig More SSSI – Favourable**

Deer Management Unit: 17 Fordie

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=421](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=421)

Craig More SSSI lies on the north side of the A85, to the east of Comrie. It is a 28 ha site of geological interest, with exposures of a large body of Caledonian igneous rock called the Comrie Pluton. The site is a wooded hillside with craggy outcrops. When assessed in 2012 the feature was considered to be in favourable condition.

**Dalveich Meadow SSSI - Recovering**

Deer Management Unit: 27 Glenbeich

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=493](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=493)

Dalveich Meadow SSSI lies on a steeply south-facing slope on the north shore of Loch Earn, east of Lochearnhead village. The 37 ha site is characterized by a large area of unimproved lowland grassland habitat on nutrient-rich soils. It has a variety of soil types supporting a mosaic of grassland plant habitats, including species-rich communities. The designated features of the site are lowland calcareous grassland and lowland neutral grassland.

The site was found to be in unfavourable, declining condition when last monitored in 2006. Several of the grassland targets were not met due to bracken and scrub encroachment, an abundance of thistles, vegetation being taller than appropriate and a high percentage of bare ground in some areas. Since this assessment, a programme of bracken control, together with a new stock grazing regime have been put in place with the aim of returning the site to a more favourable condition.

**Fintulich SSSI – Favourable**

Deer Management Unit: 23 Invergeldie

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=639](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=639)

Fintulich SSSI lies on open hillside in Glen Lednock, north of Comrie. The 105 ha site is designated for its geological interest and is of both national and international importance. It has excellent exposures of a large body of Caledonian igneous rock and, with Craig More SSSI, is part of the Comrie Pluton. The rock at Fintulich is a particularly good example of a zoned pluton. It was found to be in favourable condition in 2008.

**Little Glenshee SSSI – Favourable**

Deer Management Unit: 48 Tullybeagles

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=947](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=947)

Little Glenshee SSSI is a 42.5 ha site lying on craggy hillslopes to the east of South Perthshire DMG area, between Bankfoot and Amulree. It has been designated for its metamorphic geology and rocks of the Dalradian supergroup. The fine-layered rocks of Little Glenshee SSSI are of national importance for research into both the structures and sedimentary sequence of the Southern Highlands. The site was last monitored in 1999 and found to be in condition with no perceived threats.



**Loch Freuchie Meadows SSSI - Recovering**

Deer Management Unit: 16 Glenquaich

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=985](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=985)

Loch Freuchie Meadows SSSI lies on the south eastern shore of Loch Freuchie, in Glen Quaich near Amulree. It is a small (9 ha) and unusually species-rich northern hay meadow site, designated for its lowland neutral grassland which floods each winter. Northern hay meadow is a rare and declining habitat found only in a few valleys of northern England and Scotland. Such meadows are recognised internationally as “Mountain Hay Meadow” under the EC Habitats Directive and are a key habitat for conservation.

The condition of the site had declined due to a lack of hay cutting, drainage and ploughing of part of the site and the spread of vegetation more typical of common meadow habitat. However, more recently the site has become wetter and management has been put in place to allow the recovery of the site.

**Monzie Woods SSSI – Recovering**

Deer Management Unit: 29 Monzie

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=1185](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=1185)

Monzie Wood SSSI is a gorge woodland adjacent to Shaggie Burn, near Crieff. The 45 ha site has an unusually wide range of woodland types and about a quarter of it is open ground. The designated feature is upland oak woodland occurring in the gorge, mixed with birch at higher levels and ash and alder woodland elsewhere. There is a remarkable lack of non-native tree species and the epiphytic lichen species present are indicative of ancient woodland. In the less accessible gorge area, the ground flora is herb rich and diverse, supporting several plant species of restricted distribution.

The woodlands were monitored in 2004 and found to be in unfavourable, recovering condition. Although the extent of the woodlands has not declined, there was considerable browsing by roe deer, rabbits and voles which was limiting the potential for native species regeneration and resulted in a restricted range of age classes in the tree canopy. Bracken was also limiting regeneration and suppressing the field layer. More recently, tree planting has been carried out in two exclosures which will improve the age structure of the woodland and help site recovery.

**Tomnadashan Mine SSSI – Favourable**

Deer Management Unit: 8 Wester Tullich

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=1543](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=1543)

Tomnadashan Mine SSSI is located on the south side of Loch Tay, near Ardtalnaig. The 6 ha site consists of an old copper mine and its associated spoil heaps, and contains an interesting range of minerals and lichens. These are both designated features, the site being the best example of copper mineralisation associated with Caledonian igneous rocks in Scotland. The metalliferous lichen communities associated with the spoil heaps, including a number of species restricted to heavy metal deposits, are of regional importance.

When last assessed both the geological and lichen features were in favourable condition, although the condition of the lichen assemblage has the potential to be negatively



**River Tay SAC – Favourable**

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=8366](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=8366)

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0030312>

The River Tay SAC is a 9498 ha site designated for its internationally important populations of Atlantic salmon, otter, brook lamprey, sea lamprey and river lamprey, as well as its clear-water lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels. All features are in favourable condition.

**Upper Strathearn Oakwoods SAC - Unfavourable**

Deer Management Unit: 21 Dunira (part outwith DMG)

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=10208](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=10208)

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/protectedsites/sacselection/sac.asp?EUCode=UK0030125>

Upper Strathearn Oakwoods SAC consists of two sites covering 152 ha in total. They are Comrie Woods SSSI and Drummond Lochs SSSI, of which only Comrie Woods falls within South Perthshire DMG area. The SAC has been designated on the basis of its internationally important western acidic oak woodland. It is one of the best examples of this type of woodland in Britain and is characterized by old sessile oak woods with holly and *Blechnum* hard ferns. When last assessed in 2009, the area was considered to be in unfavourable condition. Over-grazing and the presence of non-native tree species were identified as pressures affecting the condition of the site.

**River Earn (Comrie to St. Fillans) NSA**

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=9145](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=9145)

The River Earn NSA covers an area of 3,000 ha and is designated on the basis of its special qualities, identified as: A harmonious combination of highland and lowland landscapes – transition from highland (moorland, steep sided hills with bare rock) through gentler hilly slopes of rough grazing and pastures to more fertile lowland landscape in the valley bottom; an enclosed and unified strath with the sinuous River Earn meandering through the heart of the NSA; rocky hillocks rising out of the level floodplain; diverse tree cover of woods and forests; managed farmland and parkland landscapes with traditional buildings in the eastern part; the spectacular De’ils Cauldron along the River Lednock to the east of the NSA and the open panoramic views from Dunmore Hill; the viewpoint of Dundurn on St Fillans Hill.

**River Tay (Dunkeld) NSA**

[https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa\\_code=9146](https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/siteinfo.jsp?pa_code=9146)

The River Tay NSA covers an area of 5,600 ha and is designated on the basis of its special qualities, identified as: the beauty of cultural landscapes accompanying natural grandeur; the ‘Gateway to the Highlands’; characterful rivers, waterfalls and kettle-hole lochs; exceptionally rich, varied and beautiful woodlands; the picturesque cathedral town of Dunkeld; drama of The Falls of Braan and The Hermitage; Dunkeld House policies; significant specimen trees; the iconic view from King’s Seat.