

Wild land in Scotland – an opportunity to conserve and enhance biodiversity at landscape scales



Ben Lomond from the east

Photo: John Digney

Why protect wild land?

- Wild areas constitute the **largest contiguous areas of semi-natural habitats in the UK**, including areas like the Caledonian Pinewoods of the Cairngorms and the Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland;
- Wild areas are home to a huge variety of **rare plants and beasts**;
- Wild land is **critical for tackling climate change**: Scotland's peatlands alone (most of which are in wilder areas) contain some 2 billion tonnes of carbon (four times the UK's annual output);
- Wild land can **restore the human spirit** and re-establish the now often lost ability among humans to connect and communicate with the rest of nature;
- Scotland's wild landscapes **support a huge number of jobs** in rural Scotland.

Key message 1:

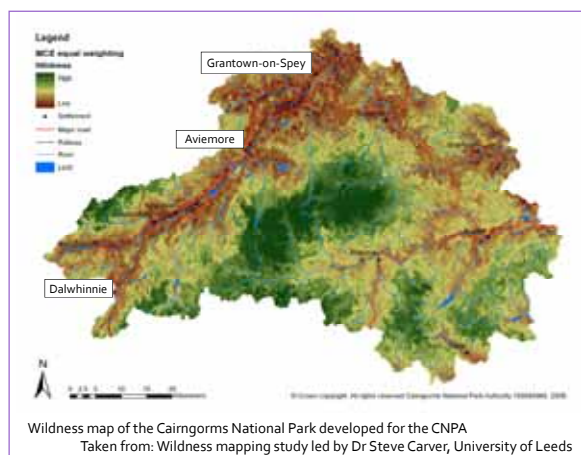
*The **Scottish Biodiversity Strategy** calls for further **landscape level approaches** to conservation and enhancement of Scotland's rural biodiversity.*

Linking wild land and rural biodiversity

- There is the need for more recognition of the **biodiversity value** of wild areas;
- The **mapping** of wild areas provides a tool for recognizing their wildness and biodiversity values;
- Wild areas provide suitable locations for **habitat restoration** and **re-wilding** projects;
- Wild land is a threatened resource, with one well-recognized issue being the recent growth in proposals for **energy related developments** in wild areas.

Key message 2:

*Focusing efforts on the **conservation and enhancement** of Scotland's wild land offers opportunities for **rural biodiversity initiatives at landscape scales**.*



Wildness map of the Cairngorms National Park developed for the CNPA
Taken from: Wildness mapping study led by Dr Steve Carver, University of Leeds



Loch Hourn and Ladhar Ben

Photo: K Brown

What is SWLG doing for rural biodiversity?

- Increasing **public awareness** of the benefits of wild land and the problems they face (for example, through the Wild Land News journal);
- Working with other like-minded organisations, groups and individuals to create a **strong voice** for wild land conservation;
- Pressing for planning policies which recognize **biodiversity conservation** as a crucial factor in the national economy.

Key message 3:

*There is the need to develop an **alliance** between interested organisations to work on protecting and conserving wild land*



SWLG has campaigned since 1982 on a wide range of issues. The group has recently formed a **new steering committee** to take its work forward. For more information and copies of our journal **Wild Land News**, please visit our new website:

www.swlg.org.uk