

# NATIVE WOODLAND

Ancient trees,  
Queens and  
spies

Huge 'boreal' forests girdle the Northern hemisphere and, together with the tropical rainforests of the South and East, they're the lungs of the planet. But shockingly little remains of Scotland's ancient Caledonian Forest - and more than 50% is in the Cairngorms National Park. This globally important boreal habitat is a haven to numerous species, not least the great trees themselves.

## The original wildwood

Although the original native Caledonian Forest has been severely diminished over hundreds of years through grazing, logging, encroachment and fire, several areas still date back to the original wildwood. These magnificent Scots pines (*Pinus sylvestris*) average around 400-500 years old - and they're still going strong. These precious areas are being extended. Technically, however,

you could claim that Aspen trees are actually the oldest in the Park. Aspen grow clustered in stands that spring from a single root network and, while the individual trees live for around 150 years, their roots are thousands of years old.

## Queen Victoria - an early conservationist

In 1878 Queen Victoria intervened in a major timber sale: she purchased

Ballochbuie Forest to prevent it being sold to an Aberdeen timber merchant. Ever since, these beautiful old Caledonian pines have been preserved by generations of the Royal Family, and they're now one of the largest remnants of original Caledonian forest. According to the Macaulay Institute of Aberdeen, Ballochbuie Scots pine are more than 400 years old.



**Native trees:** Alder • Ash • Aspen • Birch • Elder • Elm • Hawthorn • Hazel • Holly • Juniper • Oak • Rowan • Scots Pine • Willow

You can stroll through Britain's largest remaining areas of semi-natural woodlands in the river valleys and climb up above to Britain's highest altitude montane woodland, including the most natural treeline at 640m on Creag Fhiachlach.

Private and public landowners and charitable bodies are successfully expanding the Caledonian Forest, ensuring the National Park will remain one of the best places to experience wonderful woodlands for centuries to come. And organisations and individuals are coming together as Cairngorms Nature – a new partnership that will safeguard and enhance outstanding nature in the Park.

## World War 2 spies trained in the Cairngorms

The Special Operations Executive trained agents in mountain warfare and skiing around Aviemore to prepare for a raid in German-occupied Norway. After the war many wanted to continue skiing; their persistence resulted in a path to the remote Coire Cas, and the 1st chair lift in 1961.

## Woodland walks

Here are just three of the most picturesque pathways - find out more at [walkhighlands.co.uk](http://walkhighlands.co.uk). Along the way, watch out for red squirrels, crested tits, cross-bills and, if you're very lucky, the rare large grouse - capercaillie.

- **Glen Feshie - full of magnificent trees.** A 4-hour walk for nearly 8 miles through the beautiful Glen Feshie; the upper reaches are clothed in awesome Scots pinewoods. Grid reference: NN850985
- **Glen Tanar pinewoods, near Aboyne.** A 2.5 hour walk for 5 miles along an easy, way-marked circuit through the largest remnant of Caledonian Scots pinewoods. Grid reference: NO480965
- **The magical Lochan Uaine - green lochan.** A 2-3 hour circuit through ancient pines leading to the stunning An Lochan Uaine - the green lochan. A detour with a gentle climb leads up to the Ryvoan pass. The return walk has stunning views of Loch Morlich and Cairngorm. Grid reference: NH977098

