

Practical Guide: Land Management for Scottish Atlantic Rainforests



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What is Scotland's Rainforest?

Scotland's temperate rainforest is as important as tropical rainforest for its biodiversity value. The unique habitat of ancient Oak, Birch, Ash, Pine and Hazel is made even more diverse by open glades, boulders, crags, ravines and river gorges.

Temperate rainforest is oceanic and found where there is a high level of rainfall, year-round mild temperatures and clean air such as the West of Scotland. This is a globally rare habitat as these climates cover less than 1% of the planet.

It's the diversity of the mosses and lichens, which are found in vast quantities, that make Scotland's rainforest internationally important. We have some of the best remaining rainforest sites in Europe.



Status of Atlantic Rainforests in the UK:

It is thought that Atlantic/temperate rainforests are rarer than tropical rainforest.

Atlantic rainforests are identified as being under threat and in decline and as such appear on the Scottish biodiversity list as Upland Oak woodland, Atlantic hazelwood and Western Oak woodland.

Threats to Scotland's Rainforest

Fragmentation: This once widespread woodland has been felled and grazed out of existence across the landscape. It now only survives in fragmented pockets often in ravines, steep slopes and coastal rocky areas. Fragmentation results in loss of diversity and inability for spores and seeds to be exchanged.

Overgrazing: Over 40% of the remaining woodlands are overgrazed by sheep or deer. These woodlands are depleted of many of the species which make the woodland special with only few moribund trees remaining.

Invasive species: Another 40% of rainforest areas are being choked by *Rhododendron ponticum*, an invasive species outcompeting native fauna and flora.



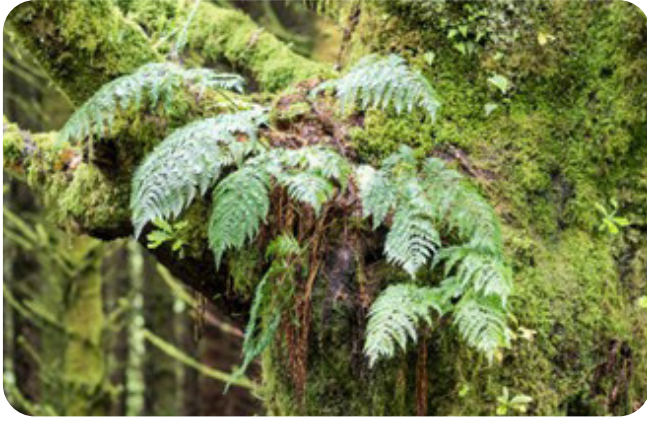
Under valued: There is little awareness of the biodiversity value of these woodlands, often called scrub by many landowners resulting in them being abused.

Pests and diseases: A risk to all woodland, particularly Ash dieback which threatens our Ash dominated rainforests.

Air pollution: Lichens and bryophytes, important species within these woodlands, require clean air and are sensitive to environmental conditions.



Scotland's Rainforests: One of the most Biodiverse Habitats in the UK



Bryophytes (Mosses and liverworts)

Scotland's Rainforest supports over 200 different species of bryophyte.



Fungi

A number of globally scarce fungi survive in Scotland's Rainforest including Hazel Gloves fungus (*Hypocreopsis rhododendri*) which is a conservation priority species growing on old Hazel trees.



Ferns

Grow everywhere from every surface.



Lichens

Scotland's Rainforest supports up to 200 different species of lichens.

Scotland's Rainforests Action Plans

What Can You Do

Don't over graze native woodland, many woodlands thrive under light grazing but long term heavy grazing will slowly destroy the woodland.

Remove all invasive species as soon as they appear, particularly *Rhododendron Ponticum* which will choke the woodland destroying it's special biodiversity.

Expand your native woodlands, particularly if you can link up areas of old woodland, to make larger areas.

Scottish Rainforest

This rare and fragile ecosystem locks up huge volumes of carbon while providing a vital home for a globally significant assemblage of species, some of which occur nowhere else. In this way it helps us combat the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis.

Further Sources of Information

<https://savingscotlandsrainforest.org.uk/rainforest>

<https://www.nature.scot/landscapes-and-habitats/habitat-types/woodland-habitats/scotlands-rainforest>

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/habitats/temperate-rainforest>

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