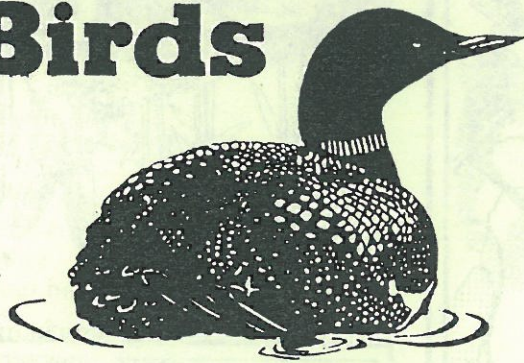


Birds



on land and sea

Many common garden birds can be seen on the cultivated croftlands, but look out for others such as stonechat, whinchat, redpoll and wheatear. Not so very long ago there were also corncrakes lurking in the infield but they have now gone, possibly due to changes in agricultural practices.

In spring and early summer you will hear the distinctive sound of a cuckoo. In the autumn redwings and fieldfares raid the rowan trees for their brightly coloured berries; whilst in winter barnacle geese come inland to feed on the infield.

Close to the shore and on the freshwater lochs there are red and black-throated divers in early spring, and great-northern divers in winter and spring. Eider, shag and black guillemot ride out the sea's swell and dive for food. Along the shore wading birds such as oystercatcher, curlew and ringed plover may be seen feeding on small marine creatures at low tide. And amongst the reedbeds of Achlochan, water rail have been seen, and teal and lapwing breed in the general area.

Ben More Coigach reserve is managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scotland's major voluntary nature conservation body. It was originally gifted to the Royal Society for Nature Conservation through the generous help of Christopher Cadbury and the late Philip Henman.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust was founded in 1964. Its aims are to protect and conserve Scotland's wildlife by:

- * establishing wildlife reserves, where wildlife can be safeguarded, managed and studied and where visitors can enjoy wildlife and the environment;
- * encouraging public interest and involvement in conservation and extending public awareness and appreciation through talks, exhibitions, film shows and nature trails;
- * advising landowners, farmers, foresters, local authorities, and others on matters concerning nature conservation and wildlife;
- * carrying out surveys of wildlife resources and their distribution.

We are a voluntary body and a charity, and rely on people like you to help us and the wildlife of Scotland.

Why not join us and, if you can, take part in our work as a volunteer?

For further information and membership leaflets see the Coigach warden at:

Achvraie Caravan
Achvraie
Achiltibuie

or contact the Scottish Wildlife Trust at:

Cramond House
Kirk Cramond
Cramond Glebe Road
Edinburgh
EH14 6NS

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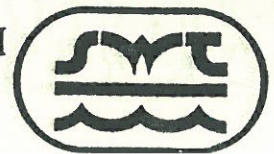


BEN MORE COIGACH

wildlife reserve



SCOTTISH
WILDLIFE
TRUST



Tops

Bilberry
Bearberry
Crowberry
Least willow
Trailing azalea
Alpine lady's mantle



Crags

Sweet woodruff
Small-white orchid
Roseroot

Grassy

Uplands

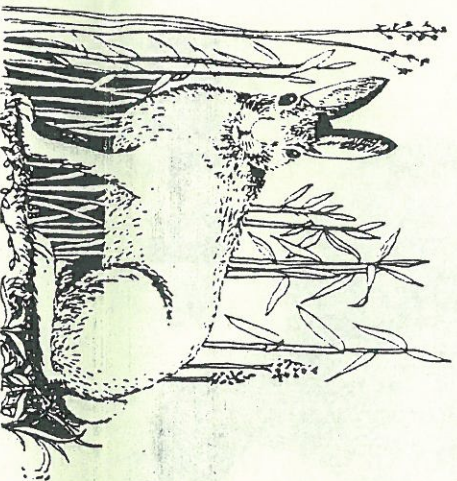
Deergrass
Tormentil
Common milkwort
Heath-spotted orchid
Louisewort

Lochs

White water-lily
Water horsetail
Bog bean
Kingcup

Moorland

Heathers
Purple moor-grass
Cottongrass



Crofts

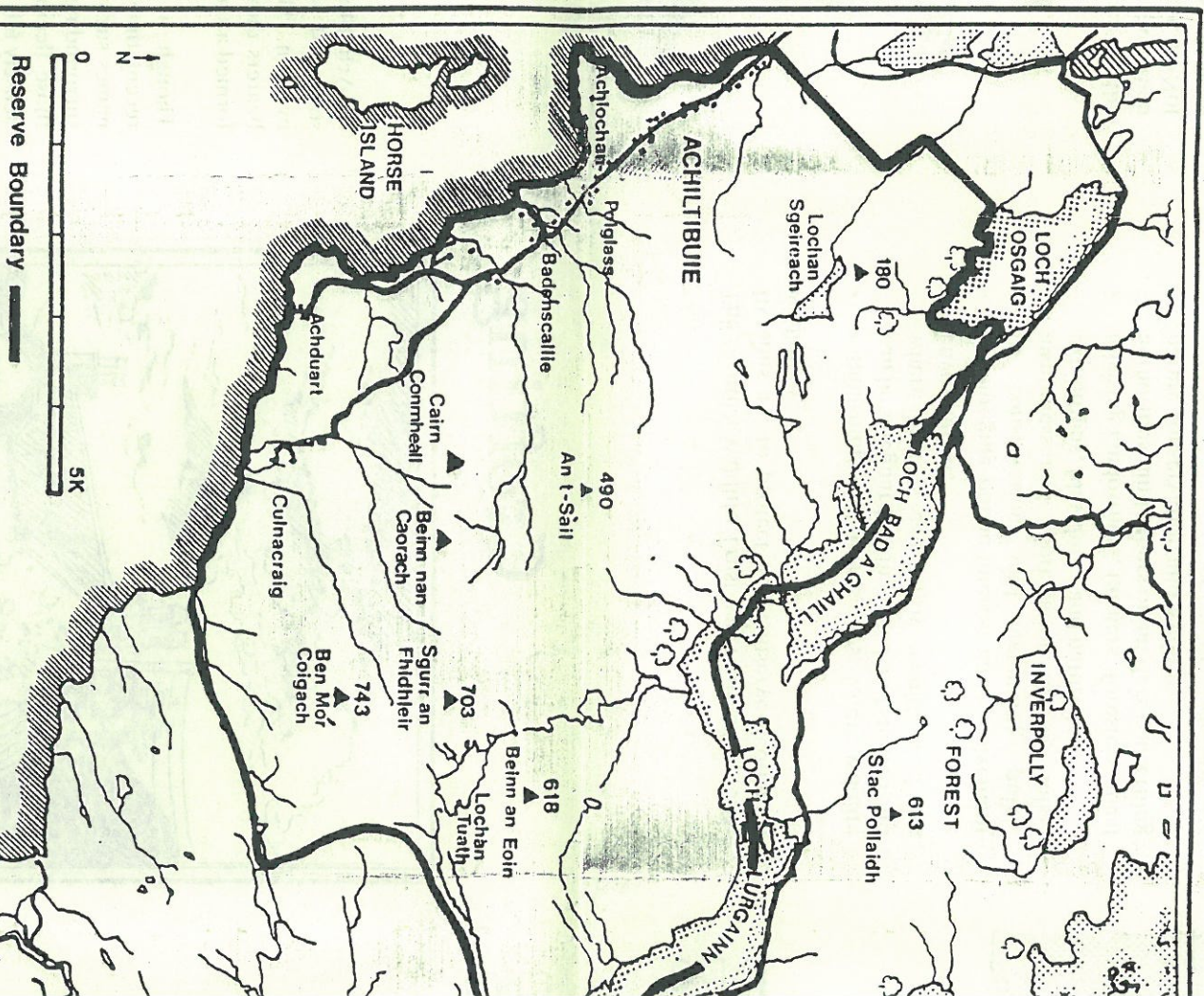
Yellow-flag
Kingcup
Rushes
Lesser butterfly-orchid



In Coigach there are many interesting habitats—woodland, moorland, upper grassland, loch, marshes, windswept hilltops, and rocky ledges, —all supporting their own special variety of wildlife.



Lizards live on the drier heath while frogs, toads, large red damselflies and golden-ringed dragonflies can be seen in the wetter areas.



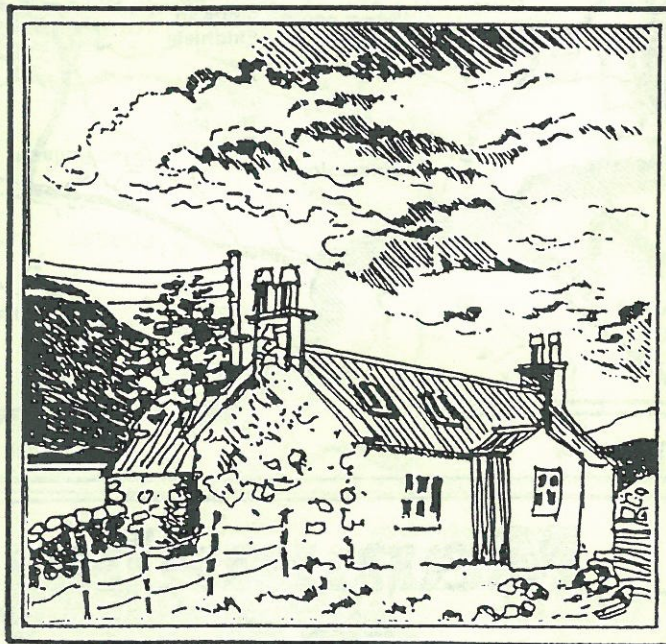
BEN MORE COIGACH

Covering nearly 6000 ha. (13200 acres), Ben More Coigach is the Scottish Wildlife Trust's largest reserve. It stretches from the small crofting community of Achiltibuie and its neighbouring townships across a wild, rugged landscape whose mountains culminate in Ben More Coigach (743m) itself. Their precipitous, rocky slopes are surrounded by heather moorland, numerous lochans, peat bogs and a chain of large lochs which separate Coigach from the strikingly individual peaks of the adjacent Inverpolly National Nature Reserve to the north. Several of the rocky skerries at the southern end of the Summer Isles, in outer Loch Broom, are also included within the reserve. On a clear day from the higher ground the outline of the Outer Hebrides is etched on the western horizon; to the south west the northern peninsula of Skye may be seen.

Geology

The peaks of Coigach and Inverpolly are just tiny remnants of a once extensive Torridonian sandstone plateau. Over thousands of millions of years, the action of water and ice has eroded this surface down to the craggy summits which can be seen today. It is a good test of the imagination to stand on Coigach's peaks and visualise the vast amounts of rock removed naturally through time!

Crofting



The whole of the reserve is under crofting tenure, and includes within its general boundary some nine crofting townships. Before the 19th century Clearances, however, settlement sites were fewer. A mid-18th century survey shows the townships only around Badenscallie, Polglass, Achlochan and Achiltibuie. The outermost settlements were then only grazings, although the hut circles below Culnacraig and behind Achiltibuie, along with the ruined dun between Loch Poll an Dunainh and the sea, provide evidence of early man.

Both Badentarbat and Achnahaird, just outside the reserve, were cleared of their populations and the old lazy-beds survive as memorials, elongated and sinuous, across the landscape. By contrast, the former lazy-beds below Culnacraig reflect the painful initial labours of those seeking a new home after the evictions further north.

At Achiltibuie, it is said that the women disarmed some 20 sheriff's officers bearing notice of eviction. The summonses were burnt and their bearers ducked in the water while the local men formed a second line of defence.

Though a strongly Gaelic-speaking area until recent times, the Norse influence is reflected in names such as Ullapool, Tanera and Osgaig. The surrounding hills provided a suitable refuge for those fleeing from the incoming Norse — more densely felt in Easter Ross.

Tradition has it that one young man ran all the way from Dingwall to Coigach and sought a drink in Loch Lurgainn. Lifting his elderly father from his shoulders, he discovered that only the legs were left — the rest swept off by branches during their flight through the forests. Not being much use without the rest, the legs were thrown in the 'Loch of the Shanks'.

In recent centuries, however, there would have been no forest to cause such damage. Over time they were burnt, felled and overgrazed. The traditional economy was cattle-based, with some sheep and goats, and a limited amount of arable providing often insufficient crops of oats, barley and hay. Potatoes subsequently replaced corn crops, and large-scale sheep-farming, mainly with Cheviot sheep hereabouts, replacing cattle. Today, the economy is based on a combination of local fishing, tourism and crofting. The various fishing activities are now on the increase — fishing for prawns is moving from creels to trawling, crabs and lobsters for local hotels are farmed on Tanera and fished from the sea, and a new mussel farm is proposed for the waters off Horse Island.