

## PIPER'S WOOD EXTENSION - A 2017 Update

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In 1989, the Club marked its centenary by financing the enclosure of Piper's Wood, a 1.7-hectare (4.3 acre) site in Glen Ey (NO 098 857), courtesy of Mar Estate. Plant distribution at the time was noted by Heather Salzen, then vice-county recorder of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI), (see *Cairngorm Club Journal*, 101, 1992, pp. 9-17). She followed this up by subsequent recordings as published in this Journal until 2001. Piper's Wood has now re-established itself by regeneration as a predominantly birch woodland, with consequent changes in associated flora. Early regeneration was in fact so apparent, due to the inhibition of deer grazing, that it stimulated the Mar Estate to enclose a larger area of the glen opposite Piper's Wood, and this is developing well.

In 2013, the Club funded a further enclosure in Glen Ey (see colour photograph No1) of around 1.5 hectares uphill from Piper's Wood. In 2013, Ian Francis, the Botanical Society's South Aberdeenshire vice-county recorder, undertook a baseline survey of its vegetation which was published in the *Cairngorm Club Journal*, (111, 2015, pp. 267-271), and Club members carried out a further survey in 2015.

In 2017, the initial impression was of a marked difference in the height of vegetation within the enclosure. The many grasses and sedges had reached their full potential whilst taller plants including goldenrod and knapweed protruded above them. The most remarkable increase was in the number of downy birch seedlings pushing through the heather, particularly on the lower slope, with over 80 recorded which compares with an initial count of only 15 four years ago. This is heartening, since, when the original Piper's Wood was first surveyed by Heather in 1989 she reckoned that the few remaining elderly birches had almost reached the end of their ability to produce seed. Seven small rowans were also seen in the extension in 2013, (one around a metre in height) and an increase in creeping willow and so there is a fast-developing woodland on this previously deer-grazed site.

Plant species identified *since* 2013 are:

<i>Alchemilla alpina</i>	alpine lady's mantle
<i>Alchemilla glabra</i>	hairless lady's mantle
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	common knapweed
<i>Equisetum arvense</i>	field horsetail
<i>Galium palustre</i>	marsh bedstraw
<i>Genista anglica</i>	petty whin
<i>Lathyrus linifolius</i>	bitter vetchling
<i>Linum catharticum</i>	fairy flax
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	rowan
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	germander speedwell
<i>Veronica officinalis</i>	heath speedwell

Access to this extension can only be made through the original Piper's Wood, which means forcing a route through well grown birch trees with entwining branches. Has the time come for the Club to consider whether there is a continuing need to exclude deer from this area?