

UPLANDS

Montane scrub restoration

South west Norway - a parallel universe for the Cairngorms?

Dr Duncan Halley, a Scots-born scientist at the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research, had identified the close climatic and geological similarities between the Cairngorms and the Bykle region of south west Norway. This region has been recovering from high, chronic livestock grazing pressure for over a century, and continues to experience landscape scale mountain woodland recovery.

Searching the hills for montane woodland

In 2015, the CNPA organised a study tour to south west Norway for managers from six estates in the core of the Park to help gain a better understanding of the ecological potential of the landscape they manage.

As a result, several of them commissioned baseline surveys of the hills to detect montane trees and shrubs and assess their condition, against a backdrop of reduced deer densities.

With surveys now carried out on neighbouring estates, this means a huge, contiguous block of land in the core of the Park has now been systematically combed for shrubs and young trees, with detailed information gathered on species, stem height and density, browsing damage, and herbivore presence. This provides a useful snapshot of the distribution and condition of woody vegetation in landscapes now in the early stages of recovery from a very long period of high grazing.



Creating a montane woodland from scratch

Wildland Ltd, one of the four partners of Cairngorms Connect, was inspired to create a new montane woodland reminiscent of the habitat experienced in south west Norway. A treeless, 200 ha area of the Killiehuntly Estate - which ranges in altitude from 500 m to over 630 m at the summit of Meall Buidhe - was chosen as the site of this privately funded initiative. Already more than 200,000 local origin, native trees and shrubs have been planted across the site, with further planting planned.

This project is not afraid to experiment in terms of species choice and to date a diverse array has been planted. However the project is looking beyond trees and shrubs and is starting to consider what other suitable species of ground flora, and even invertebrates, could be brought to the site to help create a more complete and functioning montane ecosystem.

Find out more ...

- **Nurturing nature land use in Norway & Scotland**
- **Wildland Ltd**
- **Cairngorms Connect**

