

**SCOTTISH WOODLANDS LIMITED**  
**GROUP CERTIFICATION SCHEME 1999-2004**

Scottish Woodlands Limited were the first forestry management company in Scotland to launch a Group Certification Scheme. The Scheme was accredited by SGS in May 1999, and the first timber sold, carrying the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) label, was in June 1999. The initial membership stood at 15 estates totalling 3,198 ha. Over the following 18 months, the membership steadily grew, so that by the end of 2000, membership stood at 47 estates totalling 22,000 ha.

By the 31 May 2004, the Group Scheme membership had grown to 115 properties, totalling 45586.9 ha of forest and woodland. This comprised 15 Associates and 100 Full Members. "Full" Members are those where Scottish Woodlands Limited manage the woodlands and "Associates" are those where, although the company may carry out contracting work for the client, the woodlands are either managed by the owner themselves or by an employed forester.

Production of FSC certified timber has grown in line with expansion of the Group Scheme, as most of the woodlands are productive conifers. In 2002, 225,753 tonnes of certified timber was produced from Group Scheme member estates and this increased to 261,324 tonnes in 2003.

The average sized member property is 396 ha of woodland, with the largest individual member accounting for 3,036 ha and the smallest 2.70 ha. Although there is a concentration of members in North East and South West Scotland, where the market demand for certified produce is greatest, we have members in South West and North East England, Northern Ireland and across the length and breadth of Scotland.

Ian Robinson administers the Group Scheme from our office in Alnwick, Northumberland, and Alison Wallace (Castle Douglas), Stuart Wilkie (Fort William) and Garry MacInnes (Edinburgh), who conduct pre-assessments of prospective new members and surveillance auditing of existing members, assist him.

The Group Scheme is subject to an external audit on an annual basis by our accreditation body, SGS. A sample of the membership, usually 8-10 estates, are visited over a period of two weeks each year to ensure that the necessary standards are being maintained. The FSC has recognised the UK Woodland Assurance Standard as meeting their principles and criteria, and it is against this Standard that the members of the Scottish Woodlands Group Scheme are assessed.

In March 2004 the Group Scheme was subject to its five-year renewal audit. This was a more intensive audit than that usually carried out, as the whole of the UKWA Standard was reviewed. The audit lasted one week. Two auditors, accompanied by Ian Robinson, visiting offices and estates in Northern Ireland and Central Scotland.

Within all of the woodlands and forests that are members of Scottish Woodlands Ltd's Group Certification Scheme, monitoring objectives have been identified in the management plans, and data is recorded. These records charter the progress that has been made towards meeting the chosen management objectives and compliance with the certification standard (UKWAS).

The monitoring records are maintained by the respective managers and form the basis of annual summaries that are supplied to the Group Scheme manager. These annual summaries form the basis of this compilation of the monitoring records from the original members, which is to be made available to the public via the Scottish Woodlands Ltd web-site.

Individual reports on the original members, that formed the Group Scheme at its inception, are detailed below, together with a general over-view of the monitoring taking place in the membership.

## **MONITORING SUMMARY OF THE ORIGINAL MEMBERS**

On all of the properties a few standard monitoring topics were chosen. These include:

- Tree Health
- Invasive species
- Public access
- Illegal activities

In addition to the topics above, site specific items were identified, and it is these that are briefly summarised per member. All of the original members of the Group Scheme are located in Scotland, with the majority in the north of the country.

The recording of monitoring data is undertaken in several ways. In some instances outside experts are used such as RSPB and SNH, and they provide the respective managers with reports. Scottish Woodlands Ltd also collect data on the monitoring objectives by means of specially designed forms. Site Inspection forms are also used to record site visits by the manager during forest operations. These record items such as contractor details (Health and Safety), site management and any necessary corrective actions required. In addition Environment and Bio-diversity monitoring forms are used by managers and estate staff to record items such as crop health, ground damage, pollution and red data species sightings.

### **BIRKENBOG**

A small property totalling 10.7 ha near Fordyce in Banffshire, North East Scotland. Species include mixed conifers and native broadleaves. Site specific monitoring on this site included the continual occupation of a sett on the site by badgers, as well as the development of native flora in riparian zones after the removal of exotic conifers.

### **BEN SHEILDAIG**

A large highland estate situated in Wester Ross in North West Scotland. The woodlands amount to 301.8 ha mostly of a native Caledonian pine restoration project. The area was deer fenced some nine years ago and since then, the remnant scots pine and native broadleaves have begun to successfully regenerate. The monitoring objectives identified in the management plan have primarily been concerned with the

success of the regeneration and have involved sample plots, with SNH involvement in the monitoring process and collection of data.

Due to the success of the regeneration, the Forestry Commission paid the second instalment of grant in 2003.

Other objectives have included the regular checking of the deer fence to ensure that it is deer proof and the recording of the occurrence of red data species such as golden eagles.

### **BURNSIDE OF ALLACHIE**

A predominantly conifer plantation situated to the east of Aberlour in Banffshire, North East Scotland. The property consists of 87 ha with the primary species being sitka spruce, with smaller elements of scots pine and broadleaves. The main works that have taken place over the past five years has been control of invasive scrub (gorse) and the removal of birch regeneration from a ruined croft that was potentially damaging the structure. Red squirrels are also known to inhabit this woodland.

### **GLENCARRON**

A large highland estate that is situated in Wester Ross, either side of the A890 Achnasheen to Loch carron road. The woodlands amount to 514.9 ha and are predominantly a caledonian pinewood restoration project. Several areas were fenced 6-8 years ago to exclude red deer, and monitoring put in place to regularly check the fence for deer trespass and to monitor the success of the pine and native broadleaf regeneration. A significant amount of regeneration has occurred, however, growth rates have been slow. Golden eagles are regularly seen on the higher ground adjacent to the woodlands.

### **GLENTRUIM**

A predominantly conifer plantation consisting of P 54/55 scots pine, with a small amount of douglas fir and sitka spruce, totalling 99 ha. The property is situated to the South-West of Newton More, 3 miles from the A9 in the central highlands of Scotland.

During the last 5 years the woodlands have been thinned and a few small areas felled in the hope of encouraging natural regeneration of pine and native broadleaves. The regeneration has proven to be elusive, mainly due to the periodic invasion of the site by red deer during the winter. With this in mind, and after seeking advice from the RSPB, the regeneration areas have been deer fenced (no woodland grouse are present at the moment, but black grouse are found in the locality). Red squirrels are commonly seen in the woodland and pine martens are also present.

### **HILLSGILL**

This property which consists of 189.4 ha is situated 15 miles to the South West of Edinburgh, Scotland, adjacent to the A70. It is predominantly a mixed conifer plantation, although recently, a significant proportion of native broad-leaves have been planted in the restocking sites. The site contains an Iron Age hill fort and wildlife conservation is an important management objective.

Six Barn Owl nesting boxes were erected on site in 1999 and since then, they have been annually inspected and the results are summarised below.

- 2000 - Not used
- 2001 - 1 Nest box used and pair of barn owls reared two chicks
- 2002 - 1 Nest box used by barn owls and one chick fledged, two further boxes used by kestrels.
- 2003 - Nest boxes not used by barn owls but by two pairs of kestrels.
- 2004 - Pair of barn owls seen flying out of nest box during field trip by SGS auditors as part of renewal audit.

### **KINLOCH**

Kinloch estate is situated in Wester Ross and is close to Ben Shieldaig that was mentioned earlier. The woodlands comprise of 487.5 ha which mainly consist of a caledonian pinewood regeneration project. The area was fenced to exclude red deer nine years ago and the remnant scots pine and native broadleaves have begun to regenerate.

Monitoring objectives have been primarily concerned with the development of the natural regeneration and in particular, deer control, together with fence inspections in conjunction with Deer Commission guidance.

In addition to the formal monitoring the owner of the property has been assiduous in recording the occurrence of red data species. These records include merlin, barn owl, black throated diver, goldeneye, golden eagle, red throated diver and otter. Many of these species are thought to breed on the estate.

### **RUSSELLS WOOD**

This small woodland amounts to 28 ha and consists of pole stage and mature mixed conifer woodland. The woodland is situated 1 mile south of Nairn in Morayshire and its close proximity to the town means that one of the principle problems and monitoring objectives is the incidence of fly tipping and the dumping of cars. Over the course of the last 5 years the situation has been monitored, and although fly tipping is still a problem, the incidence of car dumping is much better with none recorded since 2001.

The woodland is well used by local residents for informal recreation and periodic sightings of red squirrels have been made.

## **SANQUHAR WOOD**

This property amounts to 47.3 ha and is located just to the south of Forres in North East Scotland. The woodland consists of conifers, predominantly scots pine. Due to its proximity to the town, problems that have had to be monitored have been fly tipping and illegal campfires. Close liaison has been maintained with the local Community Council, as the woodland is well used by local residents for informal recreation.

Additional monitoring that has taken place concerns invasive species such as rhododendron and laurel which has been cut and sprayed in the past and is no longer a significant danger. Red squirrels are present within the woodland with sightings reported to the manager by local residents.

## **TEANDORE EAST**

This woodland property amounts to 19 ha and is located on the Black Isle, north of Inverness. It primarily consists of pole stage conifers, with the primary species being scots pine and sitka spruce. During the last 5 years the woodland has been subject to thinning operations. This thinning has stimulated the development of an under-storey of natural regeneration, the development of which is being monitored. The main species represented in the regeneration are pine, spruce and birch.

Red kites are present in the locality, and although they do not currently breed within the woodland, they are regularly seen, and a pair are resident in the area.

## **GLAISTERS**

This woodland is located in South-West Scotland, some 20 miles west of Dumfries. It is an upland conifer plantation with an area of 241.4 ha and the principle species is sitka spruce. During the last 5 years a large amount of harvesting has taken place, primarily extensive wind-blow clearance.

Monitoring has primarily been concerned with the development of the replanted sites. Inspections have monitored the incidence of deer and weevil damage and appropriate remedial actions have been taken. During the course of the harvesting operations, conifers planted adjacent to watercourses have been removed and these riparian zones have improved greatly in terms of ground flora.

Monitoring has also been carried out to record the incidence of red data species. Records show that red squirrels are present and that their numbers seem to be stable or even increasing.

## **WATCARRICK**

This forest area totals 238.4 ha. It is an upland conifer plantation with sitka spruce being the primary species. It is located in the south-west corner of Eskdalemuir Forest in eastern Dumfries-shire. During the monitoring period a long-term forest plan has

been developed for the property. This has involved holding a scoping meeting with neighbours and other interested parties. Monitoring has included carrying out yield assessments, as harvesting operations, to begin the process of restructuring, are scheduled to commence in late 2004.

The woodland contains a small loch and records have been kept of wild life sightings as part of the monitoring objectives. As well as common wildfowl such as mallard and teal sightings it also includes shoveller, wigeon, pochard, goldeneye and scaup. Goosanders and cormorants are regularly seen and there have been occasional sightings of kingfisher and otter. Red squirrels are known to be present but sightings have been infrequent.

### **TEANDORE WEST**

This woodland of 49 ha is situated adjacent to the previously mentioned Teandore East on the Black Isle. It is predominantly a conifer plantation consisting of scots pine and sitka spruce. During the course of recent harvesting works the woodland was thinned and some areas of spruce felled. Part of the felling involved the removal of conifers from a scheduled ancient monument site. Consultation took place with Historic Scotland and the Forestry Commission regarding these works, and on completion of the works, interpretation boards were erected to inform the public about the site (Pictish hut circles).

A particular problem within this woodland, which has been monitored, is the incidence of sheep trespass. Since 2002 the problem has been resolved due partly to boundary wall repairs.

Although red kites are not nesting within the woodland they are regularly recorded in the area.

### **TOLQUHONIE**

This woodland which totals 148.2 ha is located 2 miles east of the A9, next to Carrbridge in Speyside. The property primarily consists of scots pine plantations planted in the 1960's. During the course of the last 5 years the principle monitoring that has taken place has been the recording of the incidence of red data species. Red squirrels are common in the woodland and capercaillie have been regularly recorded. In conjunction with the RSPB, capercaillie monitoring is carried out and sightings recorded.

As part of forest management activities habitat enhancement work has taken place. This has included small scale selective felling and subsequent replanting to diversify the age structure of the woodland and to stimulate the development of native ground flora (blaeberry and heather). Further conservation work undertaken has involved the removal of redundant fences to remove the risk of fence collisions. Surveys have also been undertaken to identify all archaeological sites within the property so that they can be safe guarded in the future, especially during harvesting operations.

## **APPLECROSS**

This large estate is situated on the west coast of Scotland in Wester Ross. The area of estate woodland amounts to 539 ha, much of which consists of large blocks of lodgepole pine and sitka spruce planted in the 1960`s with the dual purpose of providing winter shelter for livestock and red deer as well as commercial timber production. More recent planting has taken place consisting of native species. It is now intended to begin a process of removing the conifer blocks and replacing them with native species.

Monitoring of the success of the native woodland areas has been carried out on a formal basis. Particular attention has been paid to the incidence of deer damage and annual culls agreed with the Deer Commission have been carried out.

There has been a noted increase in public recreation on the estate, especially during the summer months. This has been largely due to the establishment of 19 km of trails and footpaths through the woodlands and adjacent hill land. A leaflet has also been produced for the public to provide information on the estate.

Red data species regularly observed include golden eagles and red throated divers on the small hill lochs.

## **ADDITIONAL MONITORING INFORMATION**

Apart from the above properties there are now an additional 101 members of the Group Scheme. All of these members have a long-term management plan that contains appropriate monitoring objectives. Two of the objectives that all of the properties have, concern the recording of the occurrence of red data species and the incidence of deer.

The following is a summary of the incidence of red data species found on members properties based on 2002/2003 data.

<b><u>Species</u></b>	<b><u>Properties</u></b>
Red Squirrel	44
Wild Cat	2
Pine Marten	5
Otter	5
Capercaillie	6
Black Grouse	18
Scottish Crossbill	2
Barn Owl	3
Sea Eagle	1
Golden Eagle	5
Goshawk	5
Peregrine Falcon	3
Hen Harrier	3

Osprey	5
Merlin	3
Red Kite	3
Crested Tit	2

Five of the species of deer found in the United Kingdom have been recorded in the member's properties. Managers maintain records of the species present and liaise with the sporting interests, and also with the Deer Commission in Scotland regarding the setting of cull figures. Managers are also responsible for the keeping of cull figure records on an annual basis. Please find below a summary of the species information.

### **Roe**

Roe deer are by far the most common species, being found in all but 5 of the 115 properties. The areas where roe deer are not found are Northern Ireland and most of Wales.

### **Red**

Red deer are found on 20 estates. Most of these are situated in the Highland Region of Scotland, but they are also to be found on 3 properties in South West Scotland, 2 in the South West of England and 1 in Cumbria.

### **Sika**

Sika deer are found on 8 properties within the Group Scheme. These are mainly in the Inverness area and Scottish Borders, although they are also found in Northern Ireland.

### **Fallow**

Fallow deer are extremely common on one property in South West Scotland and are occasionally seen in another member's woodland in North East England.

### **Muntjac**

Muntjac deer are found in 3 properties, although they are relatively new arrivals to all 3 properties and not yet common. These properties are in the West Midlands and South West Regions of England.

There is only one property within the Group Scheme where there are no deer present. This woodland is situated in County Antrim in Northern Ireland. Although there are no deer present there are a small number of feral goats that are managed, to prevent excessive damage to the trees. Feral goats (in greater numbers) are also found on one more property in the Scottish Borders.

