



# Montane Scrub Restoration Feasibility Study, Glen Nevis – some preliminary findings.

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In summer 2024, as part of the Nevis Nature Network project (funded through the Nevis Landscape Partnership), we searched for montane scrub over c.30 sq km of high-altitude ground in Glen Nevis, with help from Ellie Corsie (NLP), Kati Karki (John Muir Trust) and Alasdair Strachan.

The search area was mostly above 650m, encompassing parts of Ben Nevis, Aonach Beag and the western Mamores, and took us to many exciting and hardly explored locations. As well as montane shrubs, we took the opportunity to record other vascular plants resulting in many new records, especially for arctic-alpines.



**Downy Willow *Salix lapponum*** is the commonest truly montane willow in the area. We found it to be much more widespread than was previously known with at least 950 plants recorded. Populations on limestone on the south-west face of Aonach Beag (left) and on Sgurr a' Bhuic were much larger than expected, but more surprising was an extensive new population across the glen on An Gearanach, as well as finding many smaller stands elsewhere.

**Tea-leaved Willow *Salix phylicifolia*** is fairly widespread at lower altitude in Westernness but is scarcer in the mountains, where it can sometimes resemble *S. arbuscula*. We found 29 sites (165 plants), mostly new records, between 536 and 876m altitude on both side of the glen, often associated with *S. lapponum* as shown here.





**Whortle-leaved Willow *Salix myrsinites*** (left) is much rarer than Downy Willow in the area, with just three known populations in Coire Dearg west of Stob Ban. A total of 59 plants were recorded at these locations in 2024, all on north-facing crags and ledges (right).

We also experimented with using a drone (operated by James Bunyan of Tracks Ecology) to survey inaccessible cliffs for this and other species.



**Juniper *Juniperus communis***, nearly always the prostrate subspecies *nana*, proved to be much more widespread than previously known and was abundant in several places, notably the steep southern slopes of Carn Dearg on the south side of Ben Nevis, on Meall Cumhann, in Coire Riabhach, and in Coire nan Laogh where some very extensive stands were recorded. Despite the large number of plants found (>400), berries were very rarely seen.

## Some new finds in the Mamores



Three populations of **Mountain Avens** *Dryas octopetala* (above) on the western flank of An Gearanach, on base rich Dalradian Schist at 670-740m asl, were the first records of this species for Glen Nevis and the Mamores.



**Northern Rock-cress** *Arabidopsis petraea* (left) near Sgurr an Iubhair, was found in three new monads, showing the Mamores to be a stronghold for this species in Westernness. Plants with undivided leaves were frequent.

Three fruiting populations of **Alpine Speedwell** *Veronica alpina* (right) were recorded on steep north-facing ground on Na Gruagaichean between 840 and 960m asl on Dalradian schist. This is a first for the hectad and only the second monad record for the Mamores.



Several new locations for **Chestnut Rush** *Juncus castaneus* (left) were also recorded in the Mamores, as was a new population of **Black Alpine-sedge** *Carex atrata* (right) with six flowering plants at the foot of a huge outcrop on Sgurr a' Mhaim, at 869m asl.



A good population of **Small Cow-wheat** *Melampyrum sylvaticum* was found in classic habitat - a north facing gorge woodland near a waterfall. This is the first record for Glen Nevis and only the third recent record in Westernness, 20km from the nearest site at Loch Ossian.