



Wild Ennerdale



Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) are the best examples of our national heritage of wildlife habitats, geological features and landforms. SSSI's cover around 7% by area of the land surface of Great Britain. Ennerdale has three -

- Ennerdale Water SSSI
- Ennerdale & Pillar SSSI
- Bowness Knott SSSI

The first two sites are designated for reasons of flora and fauna whilst the last site is geological.

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Ennerdale Water SSSI

Facts

Area of SSSI: 338ha

Date first notified: 1965



Ennerdale Water is an important example of a nutrient poor lake, and in Cumbria is second only to Wastwater for its low productivity, it supports a characteristic fauna and flora which includes examples of nationally rare and local species. The fish population includes the rare Arctic charr. The charr in Ennerdale have been isolated for thousands of years and are genetically distinct from other charr populations. The

charr in Ennerdale represent the only population (of nine in England and Wales) which still spawn only in the running water of feeder streams. The stony margin of the lake supports a range of characteristic plant species including water lobelia and quiltwort, which are frequent in Cumbria but uncommon elsewhere in England. The banks of the shore support European and Western gorse, with Ling & Bell heather, and occasional bilberry.



Designated for the important lake margin habitats this site includes the ancient semi-natural woodland on the scree below Latterbarrow. This woodland is important not just for the native oak and birch but for the many varieties of ferns, mosses and lichens that grow on the rocks and scree.

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Ennerdale & Pillar SSSI

Facts

Area of SSSI: 1498ha

Date first notified: 1991



Ennerdale and Pillar SSSI is important in exhibiting one of the best known examples of altitudinal succession in England. From native birch-oak woodland at 120m asl on the shores of Ennerdale Water the vegetation changes through sub-montane heaths and grasslands to montane heaths along the summit ridge at an altitude of 890m. The range of heathland types found on Ennerdale Fell are some of the most important in West Cumbria as are the herb-rich upland ledge communities associated with the crags of Pillar. Additional interest is provided by the native broadleaved woodland of Side Wood and the upland breeding bird community.

Side Wood is one of the best examples of upland Birch-Sessile Oak woodland in West Cumbria.

Under a full canopy of oak a luxuriant ground carpet of bryophytes has developed with large hummocks of *Polytricum strictum* and bog mosses with liverworts. The lichen communities of Side Wood are of regional importance.

Above Side wood extensive areas of heathland occur broken only by small areas of acid grassland. At lower altitudes the heathland is dominated by heather with lesser amounts of bell heather and bilberry, whilst grassland species include sheeps-fescue, common bent, mat grass, tomentil and heath bedstraw. Above the Side a number of rare oceanic bryophytes have been recorded within the heathland.



Along the summit ridge where soils are thin and rocky a mosaic of bilberry heaths and moss dominated heaths occur whilst in hollows where late snow beds lie patches of mat grass dominate. The moss dominated heaths occur on the summits of Pillar and Little Scoat Fell and typically comprise Woolly Hair moss with Stiff sedge and Viviparous fescue. Several rare species include willow (*salix herbacea*) and two lichens, *Cetraria islandica* and *Cladonia arbuscula*.

The crags themselves are made up of a large complex of Borrowdale volcanics which have weathered to create a complex of steep faces, ledges and gullies. Typical species present include Water Avens, Roseroot, Smooth Lady's Mantle, Golden Rod,

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and Hogweed. Less common include Alpine Saw-wort, Meadow Rue and the nationally rare Cinquefoil *Potentilla fruticosa* at one of only 3 Cumbrian sites. Yellow and Starry Saxifrages can be found on rocky outcrops where water continually runs.

As a result of the range of habitats found within the SSSI the site supports one of the best upland breeding assemblages in West Cumbria. Breeding species include Buzzard, Peregrine, Merlin, Red grouse, Wheatear, Whinchat and Ring-ouzel.



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Bowness Knott SSSI

Facts

Area of SSSI: 40ha

Date first notified: 1985

Bowness Knott is important for the exposures of Ennerdale Granophyre and adjacent contact metamorphosed Skiddaw Slates. Hybrid rocks are present caused by the mixing of the granophyre with the magma of a more basic composition.

The crags and rock outcrops around Bowness Knott provide excellent exposures of an igneous rock-type known as the Ennerdale Granophyre which was injected into the crust in a molten state (as magma) during the early Ordovician period of geological history about 475 million years ago.

