



Plundered then, protected now

Air a chreach agus air a dhion

Pronounced: Ayr a chreck agus ayr a yee-an

In prehistoric times the Great Glen had great forests of pine *giuthas* and oak *darach* where wolves *madaidhean-allaidh* and elk *lon* roamed. Over the centuries these great native forests have gradually been destroyed until only small areas survive today.

Early people cleared woodland to create farmland and build their homes. In medieval times, growing towns demanded even more timber, while the busy shipwrights of Inverness also used Great Glen oak and pine.

By the 1800s, yet more trees were felled for industries like leather-tanning and iron-smelting, which needed large quantities of oak bark and timber. The building of the Caledonian Canal also used up huge amounts of local trees. Indeed, there was so little Great Glen woodland left that the canal builders resorted to importing timber from the Baltic.

Here at Allt Sigh you can still find small patches of surviving native pinewood amongst the 20th Century conifers. Modern foresters are working to regenerate the Great Glen's ancient woodlands *seann choilltean*, both here and at other places along the Glen, which will also have a positive impact on local wildlife.

In native pinewoods you may be lucky enough to spot pine marten, Scottish crossbills and black grouse. *Callicera rufa*, found above Allt Sigh, is a hoverfly that is so rare that it doesn't even have a common name!

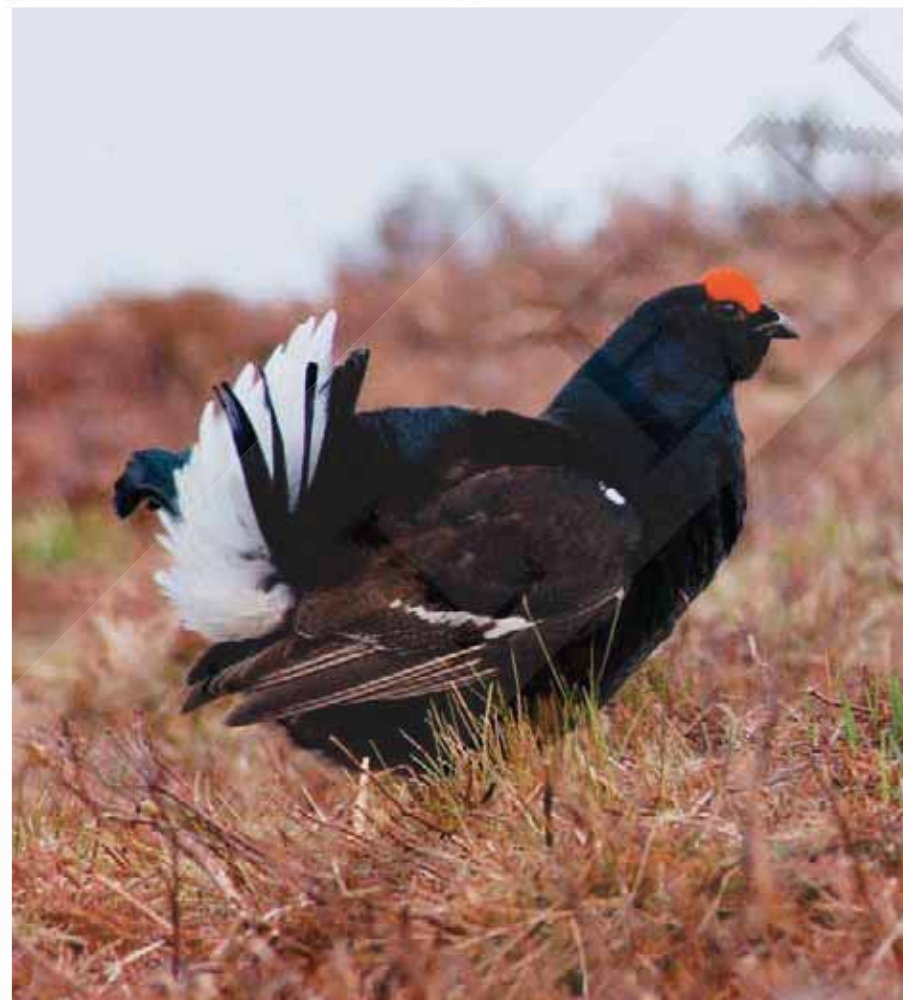
*Chi mi Sgorr-eild air bruaich a' ghlinn
An goir a' chuthag gu - binn an dos.*

*'Us gorm mheall nam mile giuthas
Nan lub, nan earba, 's nan lon.*

*I see the ridge of hinds, the steep of the
sloping glen*

*The wood of cuckoos at its foot,
The blue height of a thousand pines,
Of wolves, and roes, and elks.*

Ancient Gaelic poem, Anon.



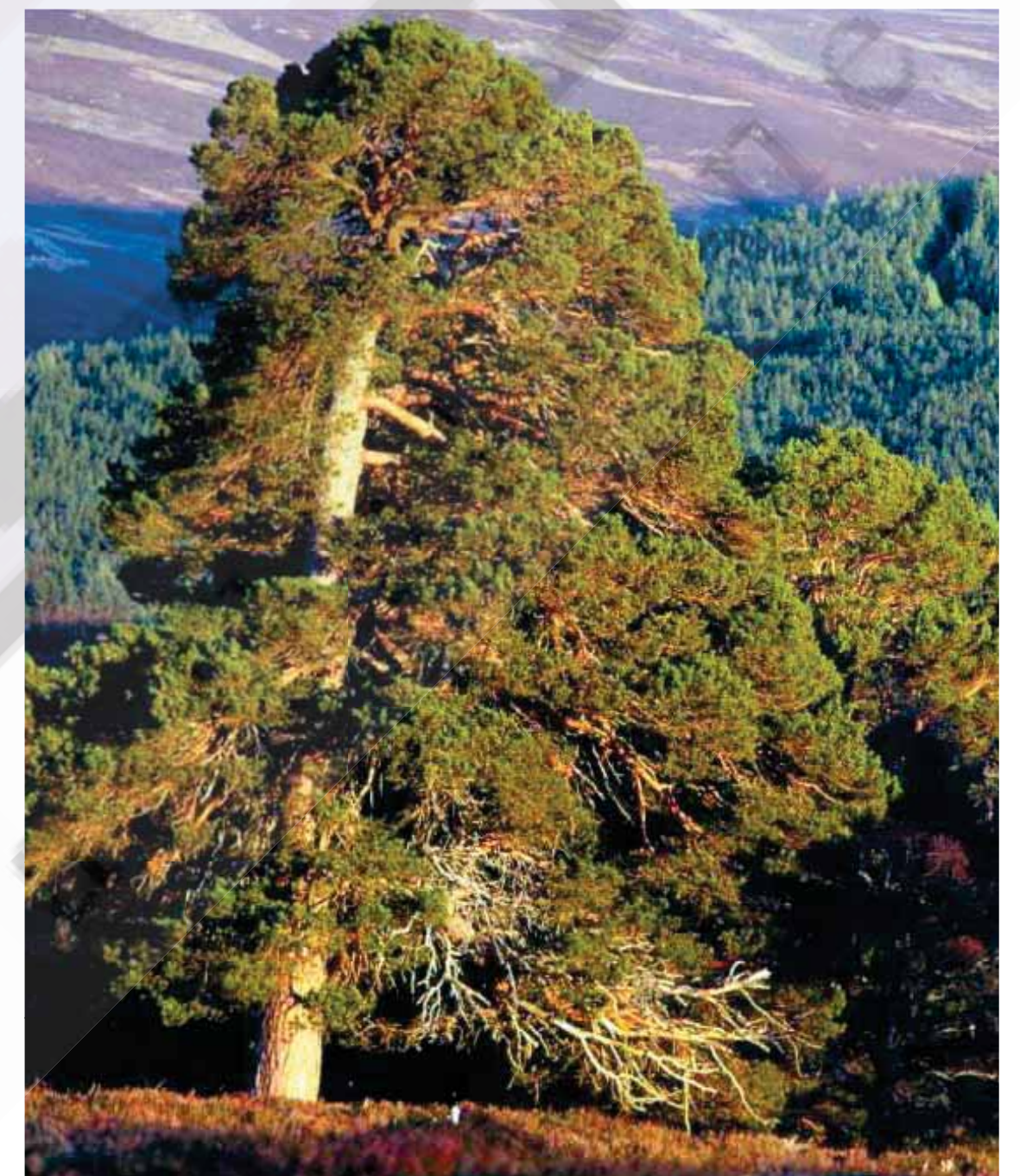
Black grouse: smaller than capercaillie, but still an impressive bird.



Scottish crossbill: has a distinctive beak - developed for feeding from pine cones.



Pine marten: once persecuted for stealing grouse eggs, these animals thrive in pinewoods.



A typical Scottish native pinewood - these trees are directly descended from trees that established in Scotland after the last ice age!

Did you know...?

The Great Glen's last she-wolf is said to have been killed at Allt Sigh. The name means "burn of the bitch".