

Devilla Forest Forth Nature Counts Survey Walk



Photo P Barclay

Situated on the outer edge of the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative boundary, Devilla is by far the largest Scots Pine forest in the local area and exudes its own special personality and atmosphere. This woodland ecosystem supports a diverse array of interconnected species, thus aiding the recovery of two of Scotland's most charismatic mammals - the red squirrel and the pine marten. Red squirrels are frequently spotted in the trees while pine martens have been known to dart across the path in front of walkers and cyclists in the twilight hours.

There are a number of lochs in the forest which offer great habitat for amphibians and wildfowl while Bordie Loch is known for its clouds of dragonflies and damselflies in the summer. The forest floor becomes rife with fungi from September to December with spots of red, purple and yellow appearing courtesy of fly agarics, amethyst deceivers and yellow stagshorn.

Amongst the pines you will find an interesting mix of non-native conifers such as larch, spruce and western hemlock - the woodland has been managed by the Forestry Commission since the 1950s and exists due to planting which began in the 18th century. However, the abundance of Scots pine, blaeberry, heather and birch make it easy to imagine you could be walking in a remnant of the ancient Caledonian Forest.

The site provides many other links to the past in the form of boundary stones, memorials and burial sites. Look out for Forestry Commission information boards and remember to stop and listen for the cries of jays, the scuttle of treecreepers or the drop of pinecones as they are discarded by crossbills.

The Survey Walk

The Devilla survey walk is approximately 2.4km long and, at a slow pace, should take about 2 hours to walk. Take your time, noting down everything you'd like to record as you go.

Begin your walk at the Forestry Commission car park (accessed from the A985) information board and walk north, following the forestry road. This section is mostly Scots pine and larch as well as some young oak trees. The path snakes gently and is flanked on both sides by rosebay willowherb, a plant known as a 'pioneer' species for its ability to colonise very quickly on barren areas such as road verges. (*NS964871 at centre*)

When you reach the wooden signpost, turn left and take the path marked for Kincardine to begin **section 2**. Silver birch line both sides of this path and there are some amazing lichens to be examined. It's worth

checking for frogs in the burn on the right hand side and felled timber stacks can be a great habitat for insects. (NS963873 at centre)

Once the trees begin to open up on your left, keep an eye out for a very rough and narrow footpath heading into the woods on your right hand side. This rough path doesn't lead anywhere but indicates the start of **section 3** so continue past it and carry on along the main forestry path. (NS960874 at centre)

You will reach a footpath heading through the woods on your right towards Keir Dam. Look out for larch trees at the entrance to the footpath and if you reach a vehicle pull-in on your right then you have gone slightly too far. Take the footpath to begin **section 4** which leads in a straight line to Keir Dam. This is a great spot to stop and record some wildfowl on the loch. Possible sightings include mute swans, moorhen and widgeon. (NS959876 at centre)



Photo A Ross

As you stand at the south-west corner of the loch, you will notice the water flowing over the footpath and draining into a stream. Instead of crossing it, take the rough path which follows the stream westwards. After about 50 yards take another rough path on your left which heads south through heather. This is the start of **section 5**. If you reach a Scots pine tree in the shape of bull horns (see picture) then you have missed the path.

Section 5 takes you through heather, blaeberry, gorse and holly and is an area where pine marten scats have previously been found. You will rejoin the main forestry road at a vehicle pull-in, adjacent to where you started section 4. (NS958875 at centre)

To begin **section 6**, go directly across the forestry road and follow the rough path through the clearing straight ahead of you. This area is a great habitat for a variety of wood-boring insects and you will notice that they have left their mark on many of the tree stumps. (NS958873 at centre)

The path leads in a fairly straight line heading south. Look out for a large tree stump on your left just before the trees become denser. This is the start of **section 7**. Pine and hemlock dominate but there is also some oak regeneration here. The quality of the path improves as you approach an intersection with the Forestry Commission's Red Squirrel Trail. (NS958872 at centre)

Join up with the Red Squirrel Trail footpath (indicated by red markers) and take a right to begin **section 8**. Continue to follow the path westwards and ignore the left turn (you'll come this way later). You will pass a wooden sculpture on your left depicting an owl, a woodpecker and a squirrel. (NS957872 at centre)

Section 9 begins when you reach a set of picnic benches. This is a nice spot to sit and look for jays, treecreepers and squirrels. Follow the path until you reach the information board at Pulpit Rock. (NS954873 at centre).



Yellow Stagshorn fungus

Photo A Ross

Section 10 follows the path between Pulpit Rock and the Standard Stone. This is a good area for great spotted woodpeckers and on warm sunny days it's worth treading slowly and scanning the path for common lizards or possibly even adders. *(NS953872 at centre)*

The Standard Stone signals the start of **section 11**. The information board reveals the interesting story behind this stone, including its suggested links to the Scottish monarchy and the real-life Macbeth. *(NS955871 at centre)*

As you walk amongst heather, bramble, pine and bracken, look out for a bench on your right where **section 12** begins. This section leads to the east end of Bordie Loch which can be a brilliant spot for watching dragonflies and damselflies and it is here that the survey route ends.

To return to the car park, head east along Red Squirrel Trail. Although the official survey route is now complete, you may wish to create casual records on iRecord for anything you see on the way back to the car park.

Thank you for taking the time to follow the Inner Forth Nature Counts survey walk around Devilla Forest. Don't forget to log on to iRecord and upload your records and play your part in making nature count in the inner Forth.

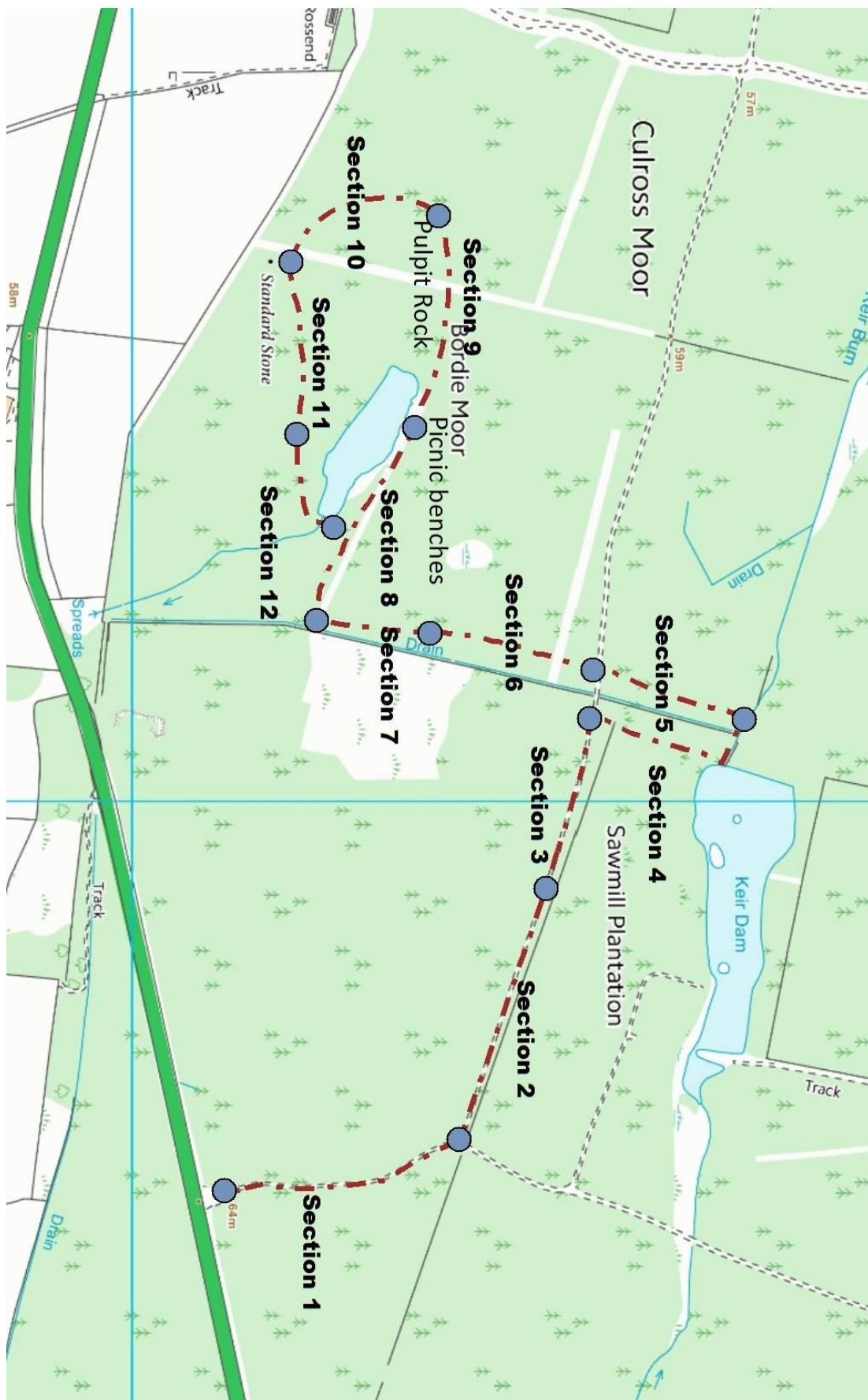
<http://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/enter-inner-forth-records>


Thank you for making Forth Nature Count!

This survey walk is part of IFLI's Forth Nature Counts project which aims to increase the number of verified biological records for the Inner Forth area. We are doing this by encouraging volunteers and local people to become citizen scientists through surveying sites then adding their wildlife records to our iRecord page; running a series of free wildlife identification workshops covering a wide range of species; and promoting wildlife recording through IFLI's social media pages, website and e-newsletter. Find out more about this project on our website:

<http://www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk/projects/recording-celebrating/forth-nature-counts>

If you'd like more information you can contact Kate Fuller, IFLI Community Engagement Officer on info@innerforthlandscape.co.uk or 01324 831 568



Transect Name		Valleyfield		
Insert a map or even a simple drawing of your transect location and route				
Location name		Devilla Forest	OS 6 fig grid ref (at centre of transect)	NS958873
County		Fife	Transect Length (m)	2381
Section	6 Figure Grid ref (at centre of section)	Length (m)	Habitat Description (e.g. farmland, urban etc.)	
1	NS964871	263	Mixed broadleaved and coniferous woodland, Tall herbs/grasses	
2	NS963873	282	Mixed broadleaved and coniferous woodland	
3	NS960874	189	Open woodland, Mixed broadleaved and coniferous woodland	
4	NS959876	200	Freshwater loch, Coniferous woodland	
5	NS958875	173	Coniferous woodland, Shrubs, Heather	
6	NS958873	179	Felled woodland, Coniferous woodland, Heather	
7	NS958872	122	Coniferous woodland	
8	NS957872	239	Coniferous woodland, Heather, Grassland, Shrubs	
9	NS954873	234	Coniferous woodland, Freshwater loch	
10	NS953872	191	Coniferous woodland, Heather, Bracken	
11	NS955871	191	Coniferous woodland, Heather, Bracken	
12	NS956871	129	Coniferous woodland, Heather, Freshwater loch	

A quick look at some species you might spot in Devilla Forest



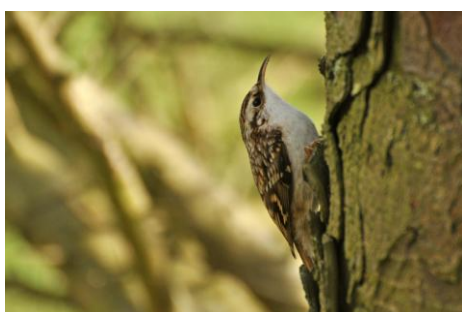
Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*)

A charismatic and nimble member of the rodent family. Devilla Forest offers a fragile but relatively stable stronghold for the species which is under threat from competition and disease resulting from the spread of non-native Grey Squirrels. Greys are also seen in the area so it is important to record sightings of both species.



Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos Major*)

The more common of Scotland's two woodpeckers, the other being the Green Woodpecker (Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers do not occur in Scotland). Listen out for their "thwick" alarm call and the male's drumming in Spring/Summer. A red patch on the front of the head tells you it's a juvenile whereas one on the back of the neck indicates an adult male.



Treecreeper (*Certhia Familiaris*)

A small, wren-sized bird often seen scurrying up tree trunks as it forages for insects and spiders. Unlike Nuthatch, they cannot climb downwards so tend to work their way up in a wide spiral before flitting across to a new tree. Try stopping and listening for a scratching noise to help you pick them out against the bark.



Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)

As the name suggests, this is one of the more frequently occurring damselflies in the UK. As the name *doesn't* suggest, only the males are reliably blue. The females can also be straw-coloured or grey-green. Bordie Loch is a great place to see damselflies and dragonflies in the summer.



Pine Marten (*Martes martes*)

Roughly the size of a domestic cat and chocolate brown with a creamy-orange chest, Pine martens were nearly wiped out in Scotland in the 19th century but are recovering well. Look out for territory-marking droppings (scats) on footpaths or prominent logs which may offer an insight into their omnivorous diet, e.g. purple/blue scats appearing during blaeberry season.

Images: Red squirrel – Andy Hay/RSPB Images; Woodpecker – Tom Marshall/RSPB Images; Treecreeper – Robert Trevis-Smith; Damselfly – Jodie Randall/RSPB Images; Pine Marten – Adam Ross

