



# a walking guide to **inchcailloch**

A jewel in Loch Lomond



**LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK**

# Welcome to Inchcailloch

Discover how dramatic natural forces and years of human use have combined to create an island of remarkable diversity.

There are two walking routes on the island – the Low Path and the Summit Path. They can be enjoyed separately or together. Stopping points are marked with numbered posts on each path which relate to the sections in this Walking Guide. The points run consecutively from one path to the other. Each path takes 30–45 minutes, but take your time and enjoy the view.

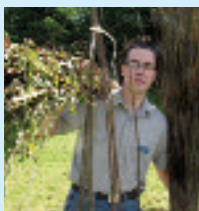




The **Low Path** is a gentle woodland walk with a few slopes. At first sight the woods look untouched by man, but look closer you'll discover that people played an important part in creating this wonderful home for wildlife.

The **Summit Path** is more strenuous with a steep climb to the top of the island. Here you'll find out how dramatic forces of nature have sculpted the island and created lots of different homes for plants and animals.

You can visit the island all year round weather permitting. If you don't have your own boat, you can hire one – or be ferried there and back – from Balmaha Boat Yard. Countryside Rangers are available on the island for much of the year.



The wooded island of Inchcailloch is a gem in the loch and part of Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve. Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority manages the island for people and nature.



# Starting out



**You can begin your walk at either Port Bawn or the North Pier (see map on page 12-13).**

The Low Path sets off from the beach at Port Bawn and goes clock-wise round the island. The Summit Path sets off close to the North Pier. From there follow the path up from the shore, the Summit Path is on your left. A path links North Pier and Port Bawn.



During your visit you'll find the island a wild place. Please help us to keep it that way by taking your litter home and leaving plants and animals where you find them. Remember – leave only footprints, take only photographs.

The woodlands are very old, but they can be damaged in an instant. Please extinguish cigarettes carefully and only use the designated barbeque areas for cooking. When walking here remember the woods are home to lots of other animals, so please stay on the paths. It will also reduce your chance of encountering some of the islands less pleasant residents – ticks. Some paths are quite steep, so be careful.

*Take your time...  
you'll enjoy it more that way.*

Port Bawn



# A well stocked larder



**For a bird flying into this wood is like taking a trip to the supermarket.**

Hidden in the bark, under leaves and on the ground are masses of insects and other invertebrates that form the diet of birds such as redstarts, wood warblers, woodpeckers and treecreepers.

Oakwoods are home to a greater variety of plant and animal life than any other habitat in Britain. Such rich biodiversity takes a long time to develop.



*Oak woodlands provide food for hungry birds*



# Woodlands of choice



**These woodlands aren't here by chance – they're here because we want and need them.**

Once there were oakwoods all around the loch. Over thousands of years they disappeared as trees were cut for firewood, building and charcoal. Then around 200 years ago, in far off towns and cities, something happened that brought woodlands back to the loch. The Industrial Revolution began.



*The woodlands provided tannin and dyes for factories in the south.*



Britain's new factories needed leather belts to drive the machinery. Leather is softened and made supple with tannin, a natural material found in oak bark.

*Nothing went to waste – a factory at Balmaha produced dyes and other products from the wood.*

Loch Lomond's landowners were quick to tap into this new market. New trees were planted all around the loch.

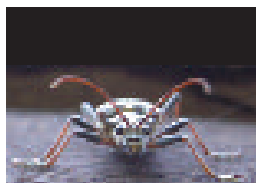
Today we need the woodlands for another reason – for biodiversity. Oakwoods are a vital habitat for many species and we need to care for them to protect the environment for our future.



# Drop dead gorging

**Look around you and you'll see plenty of dead wood here. These dead trees and branches are a vital resource for many of the woodland's inhabitants.**

When a tree dies a new world for insects is created. First flies and wasps lay their eggs in the bark and their grubs gorge themselves on the nutritious softwood just underneath. Later, when the bark has gone, beetles lay their eggs in the dry heartwood. Eventually, the munching insects, other invertebrates and fungi break down the tree until all its goodness is returned to the soil.

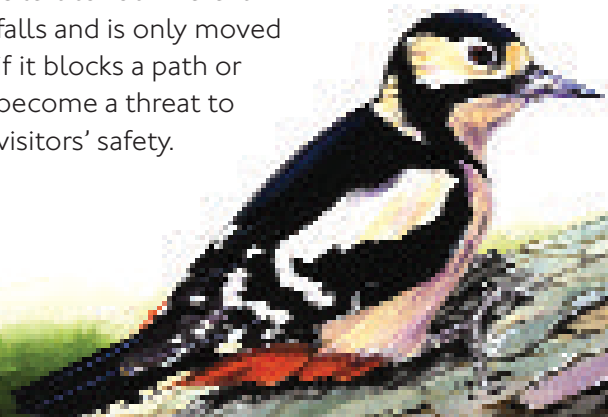


Long horn beetles live on dead wood

For many years dead wood was removed from woods like these, threatening the survival of some of our largest and most beautiful insects.

Now, when a tree dies it is left to rot where it falls and is only moved if it blocks a path or become a threat to visitors' safety.

Dead wood is full of juicy grubs



# Island harvest



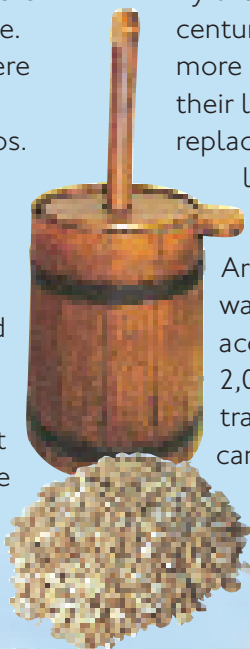
**The pile of stones and ruined walls give a clue to the lives of the last people to live on the island.**

They were farmers and this is where they had their home. Before timber and bark were harvested here, oats and barley were the usual crops.

The family that lived here probably kept a few hens, some cattle and some old fashioned Scottish sheep. Like other families they would have paid their rent in kind, with butter, cheese and grain.

By the end of the 18th centuries, landlords needed more money to support their lavish lifestyles. They replaced small farms with large-scale sheep farms or woodlands.

Around 1796 the farmer was asked to plant acorns and more than 2,000 years of farming tradition on Inchcailloch came to an end.





# Lonely home for an Irish Princess



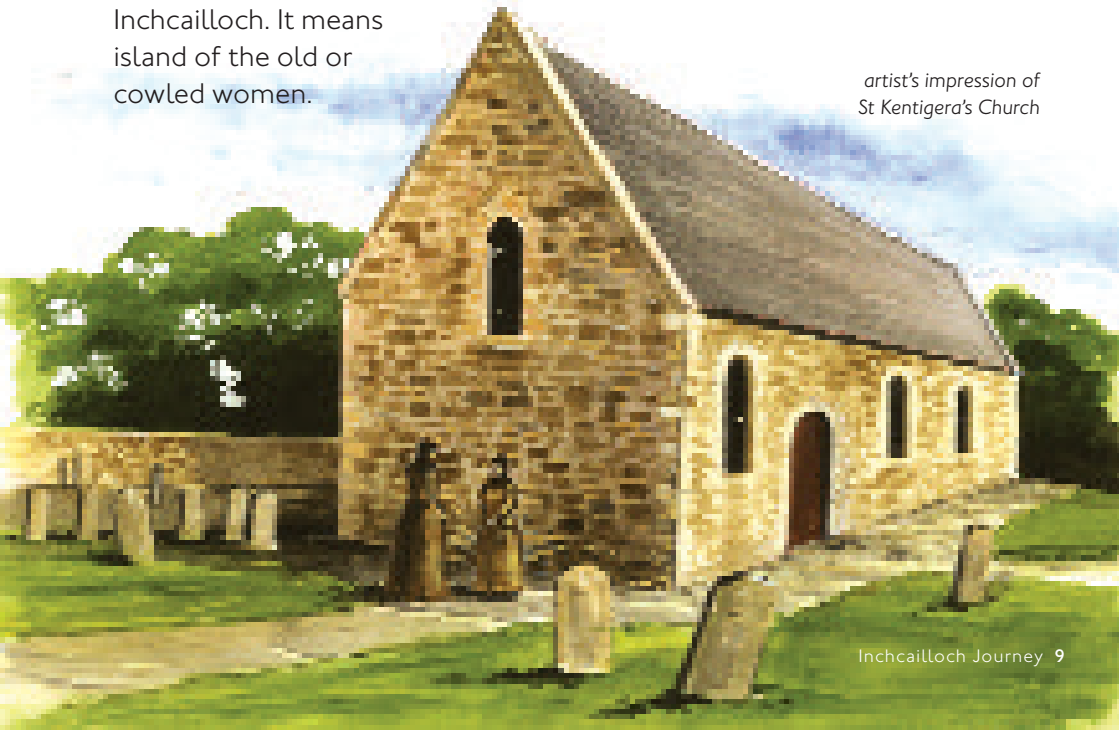
**Tradition has it that around 1,300 years ago Saint Kentigerna, daughter of an Irish King and mother of Saint Fillan, settled here and set up a nunnery.**

This was the Golden Age of the saints, a time when Christianity was spreading east into Scotland from Ireland.

Men and women like Kentigerna dedicated themselves to a life of poverty, hardship and quiet devotion. She died here in 734AD and is remembered in the name of the island – Inchcailloch. It means island of the old or cowled women.

Five hundred years later a church was built here and dedicated to her memory. It was in constant use until 1770. Long after the church fell into ruin local people continued to use the cemetery. The last burial took place here in 1947.

*artist's impression of  
St Kentigerna's Church*



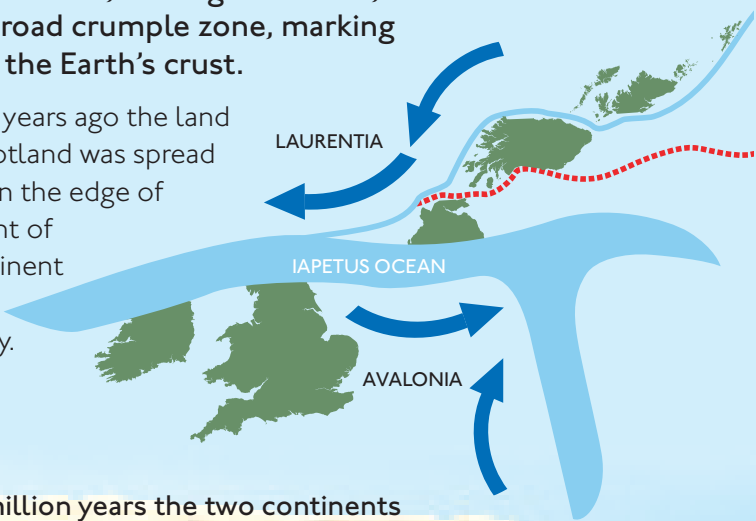
# Between two worlds



**You're walking in a kind of no-man's land between two different landscapes: the Highlands and the Lowlands. They are separated by the Highland Boundary Fault, which splits the island in two.**

Despite its popular name, the Highland Line, it's not a fine line. It's a broad crumple zone, marking a deep fracture in the Earth's crust.

Around 450 million years ago the land we now know as Scotland was spread across five islands on the edge of the ancient continent of Laurentia. This continent also included North America and Norway. England was on a separate continent, Avalonia.



Over the next 40 million years the two continents moved towards each other, pushing these landmasses together to form Scotland. The Highland Boundary Fault is where these two continents met.

# Stuck in the mud

**Most trees don't like very wet conditions, but alders don't mind getting their feet wet.**

This is the wettest part of the island and alders thrive here. They have special adaptations that allow them to grow in waterlogged conditions.

Alder seeds have tiny air sacks, like life jackets, which help them stay afloat for up to a month. The seeds are contained in little cones, making alder the only native broadleaf tree to produce cones. The seeds are popular with birds such as siskin, which can often be seen here in winter.

Nitrogen is an important plant food that's hard to come by in wet soil. Without it plants become pale and stunted. Alder teams up with a friendly-bacterium, *frankia alna*. The bacterium grows in nodules on the tree's roots and helps it to fix nitrogen from the air.

alder seeds grow in tiny cones



lumpy nodules of bacteria help alders grow in wet soil





## INCHCAILLOCH



## BALMAHA

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View from Balmaha



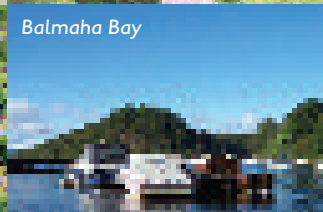
Steps to burial ground



Burial ground



Balmaha Bay



Scots pine



# Balloch nan Eun

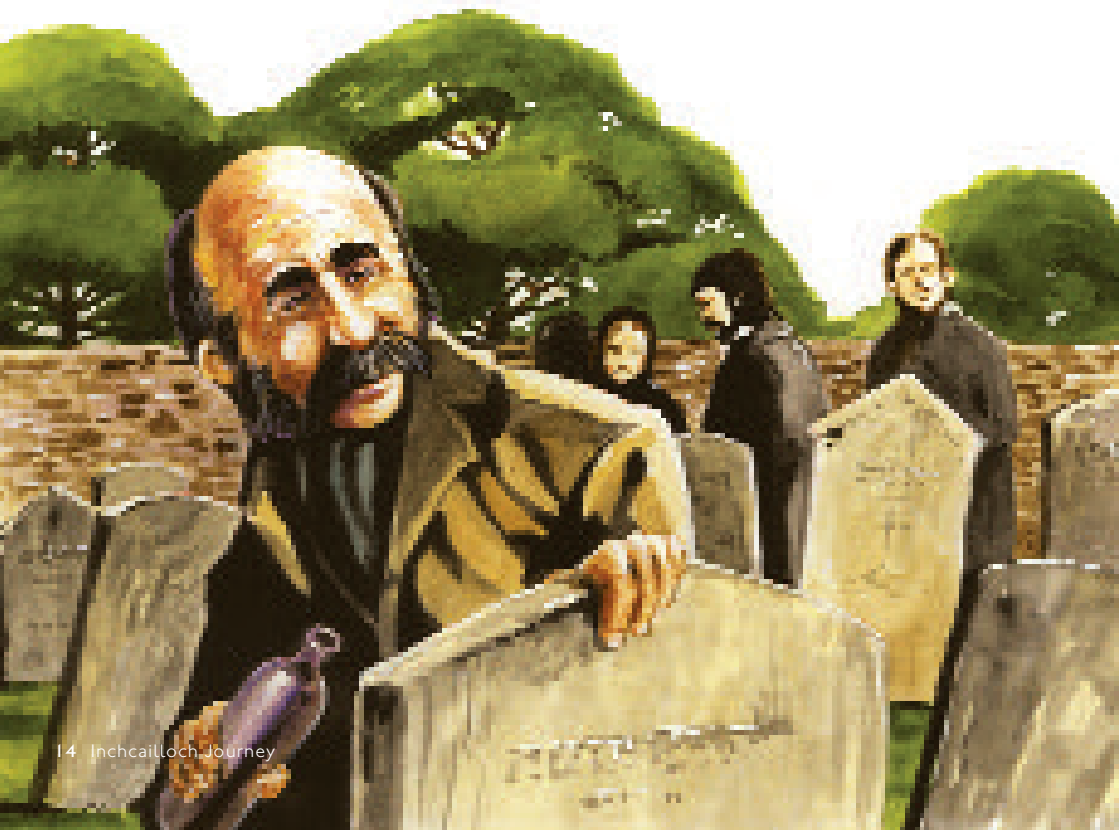


**Balloch nan Eun is Gaelic, meaning Pass of the Birds, and you'll certainly find plenty of them on the island. But birds aren't the only thing to pass up this little valley.**

It's also known as Coffin Valley. For hundreds of years, the dead were carried up here on their way to the graveyard.

Highland funerals weren't sober affairs – you can find out more about them in the graveyard.

Timber was also carried down here. Before the North Pier was built, boats were beached on the shore below you. During the oak harvest, peeled bark was piled close by the shore before it was carried to Glasgow on large flat-bottomed boats known as scows.

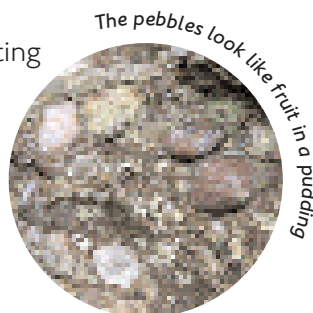


# Nature's concrete



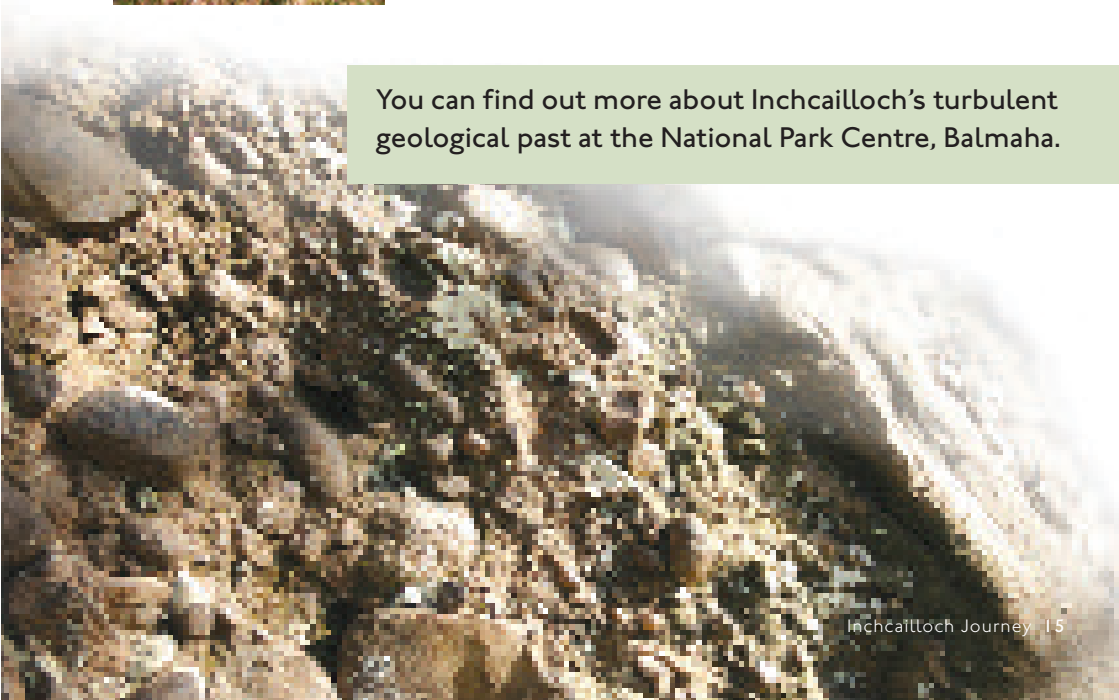
## What does the exposed rock above the path remind you of?

Some people think the large round pebbles jutting out of the rock face look like fruit in a pudding. Its common name is puddingstone, but geologists call it conglomerate because it's made up of lots of different types of stone.



More than 400 million years ago rivers flowed down from ancient mountains in the north. They washed sand, silt and pebbles into a valley to the south. This material eventually solidified to form conglomerate – Nature's own concrete.

You can find out more about Inchcailloch's turbulent geological past at the National Park Centre, Balmaha.



# Endrick viewpoint



**Nature loves this corner of the loch. You'll find more wildlife here than anywhere else on Loch Lomond. It's part of Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve.**

The nutrient-rich River Endrick feeds the loch's shallow waters. Insects and other invertebrates thrive in the water and provide food for abundant fish and birds. Look out for ospreys fishing here in summer.



© Laurie Campbell



In May and June the oakwoods ring with the sound of birdsong. Migrant birds arrive in early summer from Africa to feed on the plentiful insects and raise their young.



Fintry Hills

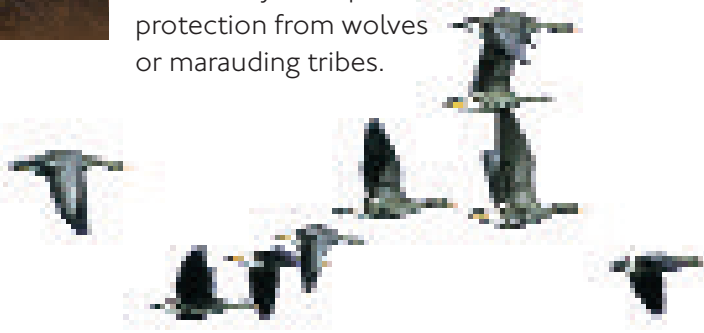




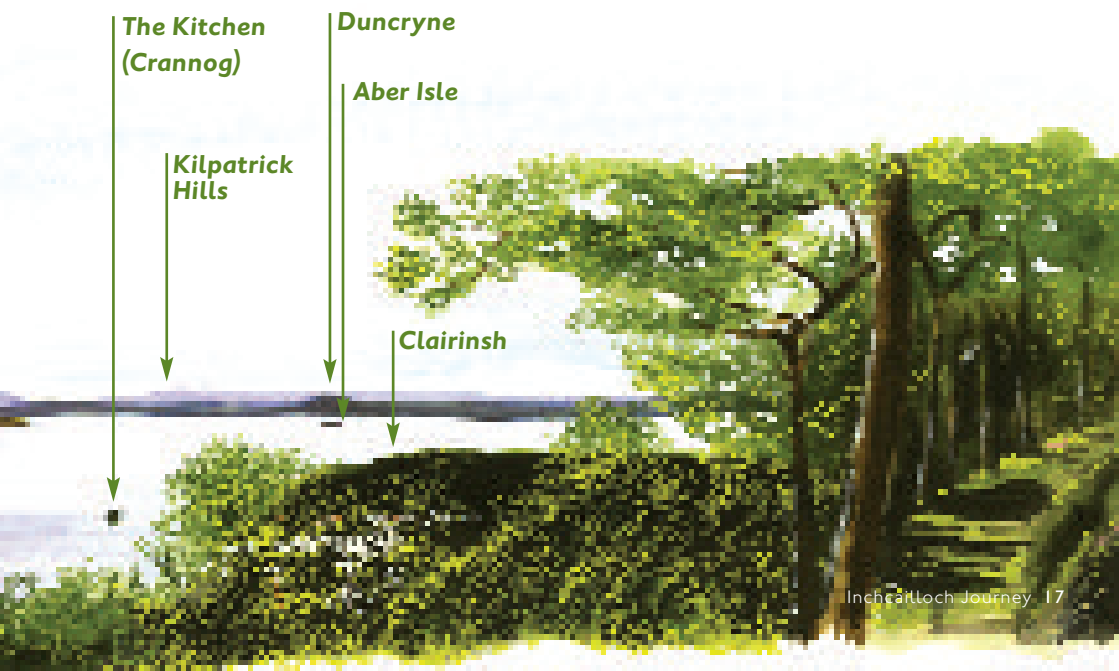


The tiny island known as The Kitchen isn't quite what it seems. It's an artificial island or crannog built by the people who lived here around 2,000 years ago. This photograph of a reconstructed crannog on Loch Tay shows what it would have looked like. It may have provided protection from wolves or marauding tribes.

The marshes around the mouth of the Endrick are winter home to geese, many of which have flown around 2,000 miles from the Arctic Circle.



*Greenland white-fronted geese*



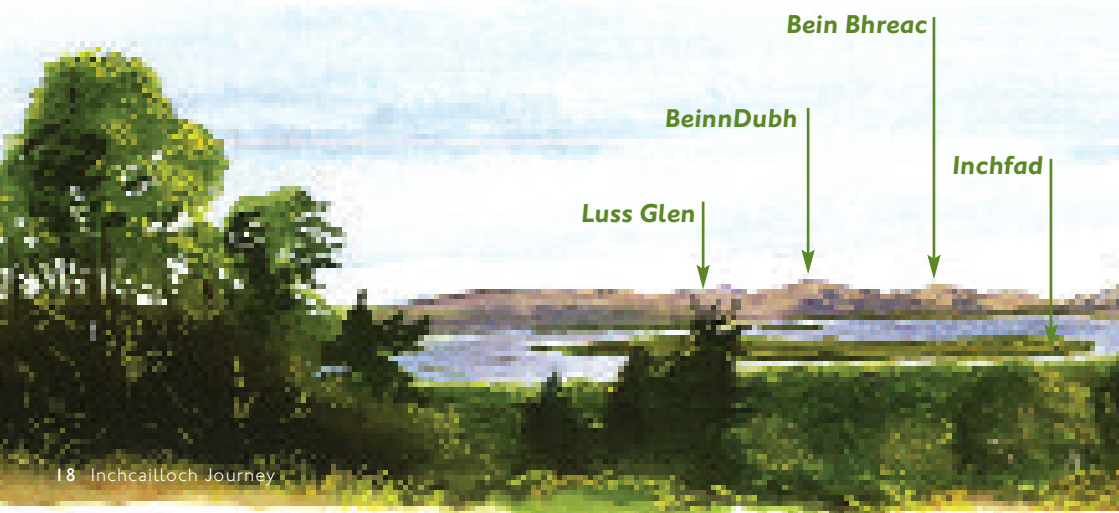
# Summit view



To the north Ben Lomond stands guard over the loch. It's Scotland's most southerly Munro – a mountain over 3,000 feet (or 914 m). But around 450 million years ago the Ben and its neighbours would have stood as tall as the Himalayas do today.



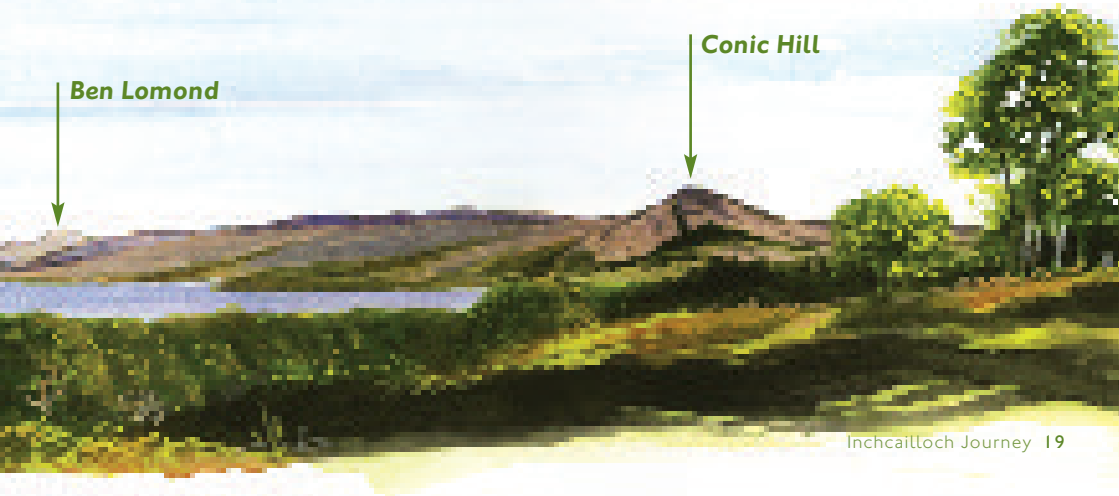
Gradually rain, wind and frost wore them down, but the most earth-shattering blow came when millions of tons of ice inched across the landscape.





Around two million years ago the Earth cooled down. Year after year, snow that fell in winter was still there the following winter. Huge ice sheets built up and spread across northern Europe.

Only 10,000 years ago, Loch Lomond was one of the last places to be released from the Ice Age's chilly grip. As the glaciers melted they revealed the landscape of deep ice-carved valleys and shattered mountaintops you see today.



# Life on top

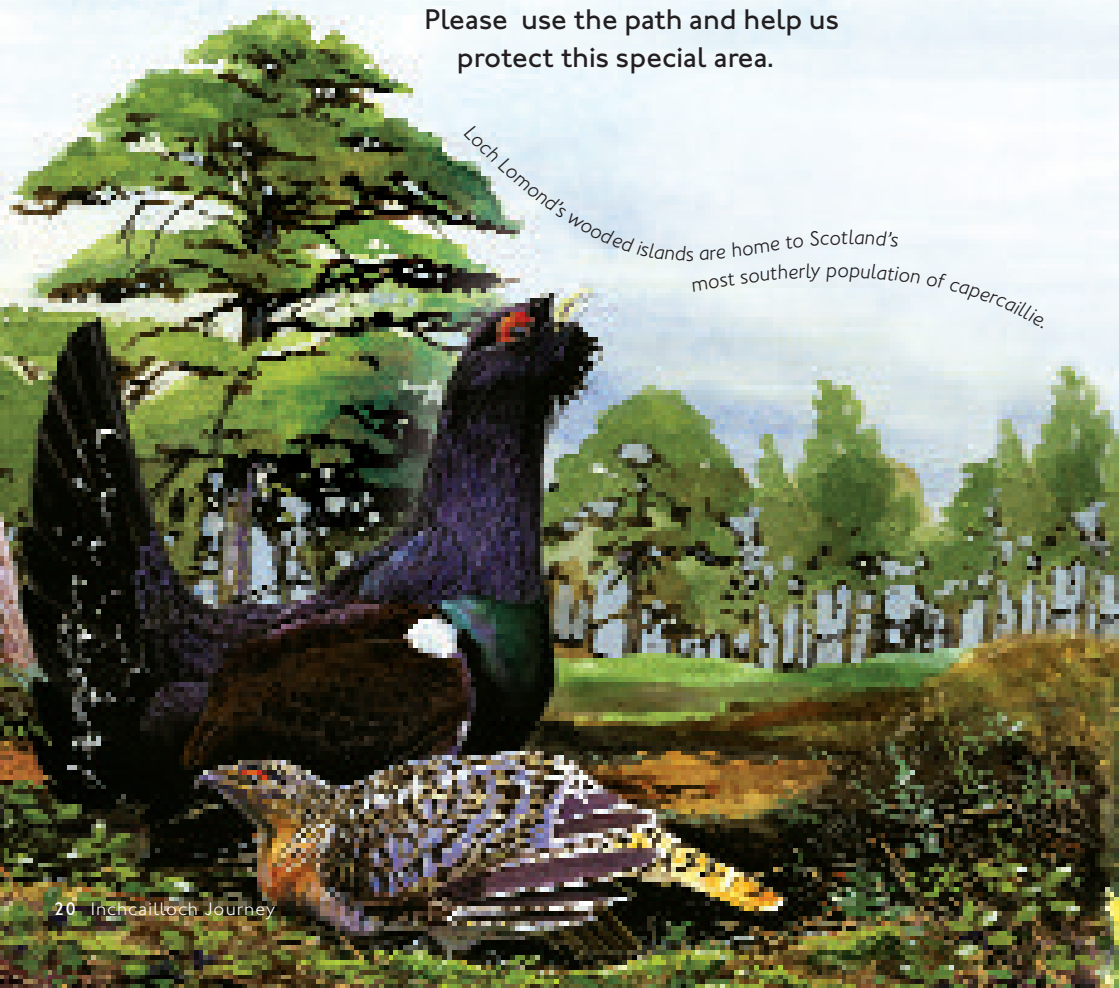


**Oaks are the most common trees on the island,  
but you won't find many up here.**

This part of the island is quite dry and rain simply runs off this ridge. Scots pine and blaeberry are well adapted to these shallow, dry, acidic soils. They provide the ideal habitat for birds like the capercaillie, the World's largest grouse, and smaller birds such as siskin, goldcrest and crossbill.

**The shallow soils are easily eroded.  
Please use the path and help us  
protect this special area.**

*Loch Lomond's wooded islands are home to Scotland's  
most southerly population of capercaillie.*



# Fit for a king



**If you were a king and you didn't want anyone or anything to get hold of some of your things, where would you keep them? If those things were fallow deer, then an island makes perfect sense.**

King Robert the Bruce was probably the first person to introduce fallow deer to Loch Lomond in the 1300s. Back then wolves still roamed the land and islands made safe deer parks, where only the king and a handful of Highland Chiefs could enjoy the thrill of the chase.

Fallow deer vary a great deal in colour from pale to dark brown and many have bambi like spots. The white ones are easiest to see. September is mating season and things can get quite noisy around here. Listen out for the bucks. Their call is less of a roar, more of a groan.



# What have you seen today?



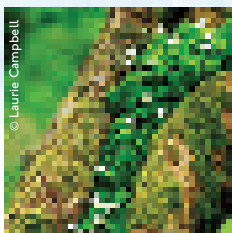
Bluebell

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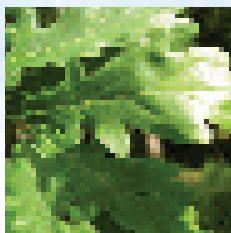
Wild garlic

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Primrose

☐

Wood  
sorrell

☐

Oak leaves

☐

Scots pine

☐

Hazel

☐

Alder

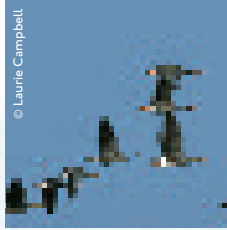
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Acorn

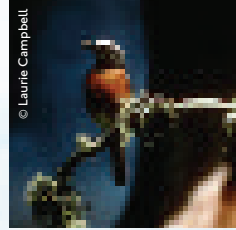
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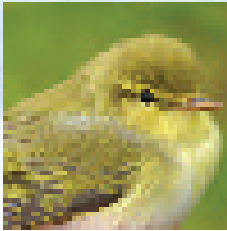
Osprey



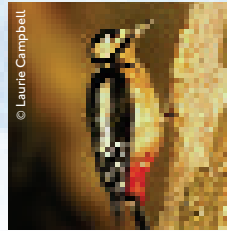
Wild geese



Redstart



Wood warbler



Great spotted woodpecker



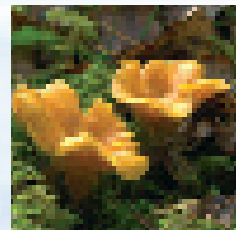
Fallow deer



White butterfly



Dor beetle



Fungi



This Walking Guide has been developed as part of the National Park Authority's MoPark project. This European funded project is piloting the use of new technology in interpreting the National Park.



## NATIONAL PARK CENTRES

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