

Native Woodlands: Scotland's Rainforest – Jenni Minto MSP

The word 'rainforest' may conjure images of a distant jungle, but Scotland has a rainforest, a temperate rainforest.

Hello, my name is Jenni Minto and I am the MSP for Argyll and Bute, and I am the Nature Champion for Scotland's Rainforest.

Scotland's rainforest, known as Atlantic woodland, is an internationally important habitat. Once occurring along much of the Atlantic coastline, our rainforests now survive in fragments along the west coast, where the combination of high rainfall and mild temperatures means woodlands are consistently very humid.

Scotland's rainforests provide a refuge for some of the world's rarest mosses and lichens - in fact, Scotland's rainforest has the greatest concentration of oceanic mosses, liverworts and lichens in Europe. The sheer abundance of lichen species is astonishing, with some of international importance and some only found in Scotland. The varied species and ages of trees in the rainforest, including oak, birch, ash, native pine and hazel trees, support this biodiversity, as do the diversity of habitats, including open glades, ravines and river gorges.

However, most of the rainforest has little or no regeneration due to high levels of overgrazing, mainly by deer. The other big threat facing Scotland's rainforests is an invasive non-native plant species, *Rhododendron ponticum*, which chokes up the rainforest and is present throughout the rainforest zone. The rainforest also faces threats from diseases like ash dieback and Dutch elm disease as well as nitrogen pollution, infrastructure development and climate change.

Scotland has some of the highest quality and largest remnants of rainforest in Europe and we owe it to the world to protect them.