

## Exposed Rocky Areas & Scree

There are several steep rocky areas within the Park, usually found around the glaciated valleys. They look dramatic, dangerous and often uninhabitable. Despite this impression, these areas are important habitats for some of the rarer plants and animals within the Park. They also attract the more adventurous visitors to the Park, such as scramblers and climbers. Entering steep ground is always risky and serious accidents have occurred in the past.



Rarer plants such as Starry Saxifrage, Mossy Saxifrage, Dwarf Willow and Alpine Lady's Mantle are found on the cliffs. Many of the cliffs above the corrie lakes such as Lough Ouler are rich in vegetation. The cliffs above the Lough Brays are rich in mosses, liverworts and ferns. The cliffs above the Upper Lake, Glendalough have Yew trees. The inaccessibility of the steep cliffs to most grazing animals results in a greater diversity of plants growing in the wet gullies.

The rocky cliffs within the Park are perfect nesting sites for the Peregrine Falcon. This wonderful bird of prey can be heard and seen flying over the cliffs in the summertime. Another big bird seen flying around cliff areas is the Raven, the largest member of the crow family. The Raven can be seen at all times of the year and nests in late winter or early spring to take advantage of dead carrion, where the weaker animals have died off after the winter.

There are extensive scree slopes in Glendalough Valley, Glenmalure, and around Lough Dan. Scree slopes are hostile places for most plants and only certain plants will grow here. Within the large

granite boulders, you will find mostly plants with waxy leaves that can retain water such as Biting Stonecrop and St. Patrick's Cabbage. A variety of ferns will grow in rock cavities. Lichens and mosses slowly build up, eventually grasses and shrubs appear and stabilise the ground for small trees.

Some birds such as the Wren nests in these areas and the Wheatear, which is a summer visitor, arriving in spring from wintering in Africa. The Ring Ouzel, the mountain relative of the Blackbird, inhabits scree slopes. This bird was once widespread in Wicklow, but is rare now.

