

### 3.16 Tarn Crag 6

Images from the walk to the waymarker tree.



First seen from the rocky outcrop near the side-track, step down onto the spongy ground to see the boulders in detail. The black mud is deep but, with care, skip across whichever area seems driest to arrive at the riven rock and its handsome holly.



The rock, split by timeless freeze-thaw actions, became the holly's home when, by chance, it germinated deep within the sheltered crack. Reaching upwards and outwards for the light since then, it has survived the confines of this difficult site.



Masses of green berries, ripening to scarlet red, indicate pollination by bees, butterflies, flies and wasps feeding on nectar from male trees somewhere in the vicinity. The fruit is nutritious for birds and animals, who disperse the seeds widely.



Deep within the crevice lichen and moss smother the rock surface, trapping moisture and retaining warmth. Bilberry, bracken and cotton grass fill the spaces between a community of diminutive holly, juniper and rowan.

The decaying wood and accumulated debris lining the inner crack provides nutrients and shelter for decomposers, detritivores, insects and thereby birds and animals – in a complete fellside habitat. Resources are limited and marginal, but sufficient for survival.



Observe natural succession in action. As the older holly expires over time it will be overtaken by a vigorous young plant – either holly or rowan – both seen here establishing their place on the rock and prepared to stay for the long-term.



The large boulder, around 4m high, isolated in the bog but splendidly adorned with a garden of mountain bilberry and heather – a refuge for small birds and creatures.



*Upper:* first sight of the junipers lining the banks of the gill, on approaching the crossing from the interesting boulders; and *lower:* precariously living beside the rushing water, vulnerable to collapse or erosion, but adapted to cope with rock-laden flooding when the beck is in spate.