

Original description of the NSA from the publication *Scotland's Scenic Heritage* published by the Countryside Commission for Scotland in 1978, and available on the Scottish Natural Heritage website at <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/B464646.pdf> (6.52mb)

## **LOCH NA KEAL, ISLE OF MULL, NATIONAL SCENIC AREA** *Argyll and Bute*

### **Description from *Scotland's Scenic Heritage* 1978**

Loch na Keal is the principal sea loch on the Atlantic shore of Mull. The outer loch is divided into two by the island group of Ulva and Gometra, and the northern water forms Loch Tuath. Although the whole forms one island-studded seascape, the component parts of Loch Tuath, inner Loch na Keal and outer Loch na Keal have distinctive but complementary characters.

The shoreline of the inner loch is of low relief, the bayhead beach backed by meadow and woodland, above which the south slopes sweep uniformly up to the shapely peak of Ben More. Eorsa is a green island of the same smooth appearance, but it is the innermost of a group of islands in the outer loch of astonishing variety of shape and form.

The outer loch has a bold and dynamic coastline of cliffs rising in landslipped tiers, unmasked by tree growth, but studded with huge boulders. The north shore has a more intimate character which develops in Loch Tuath where the shoreline is indented by a number of small bays, into which hazel, rowan and alder-lined burns tumble swiftly and sometimes, like Eas Forss, fall over small precipices which echo the larger cliffs of the south shore.

The hillsides of Loch Tuath have a mixture of rough grazing and semi-natural woodland which contributes to its more intimate and gentle character. Although Loch Tuath has a sense of enclosure that contrasts with the bold rugged and wild character of outer Loch na Keal, they share views of the same groups of islands, whether the dramatic profiles of the basaltic Staffa and Treshnish Isles, or the greener, shelved islands of Ulva, Gometra and Little Colonsay, or the innumerable skerries that pepper the whole bight with eyecatching shapes.