

# Monach Isles

Marine Protected Area

The Monach Isles from the air  
© Patricia and Angus Macdonald, AeroGraphica

Remote and wild islands



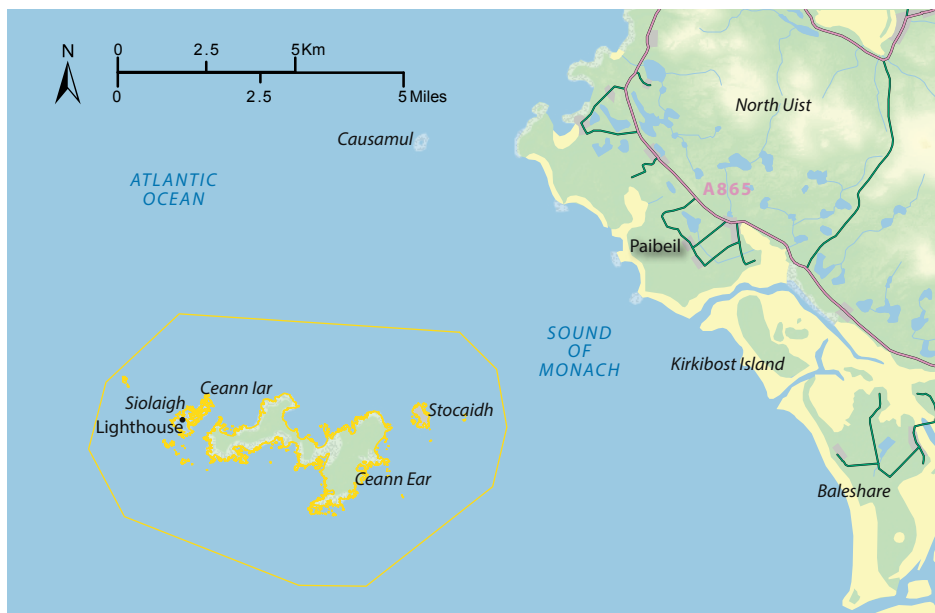
# Monach Isles

## Marine Protected Area

The Monach Isles, also known as Heisker, are an island group west of North Uist in the Outer Hebrides where the signs of glacial erosion and more recent coastal processes are clearly visible in the landscape today.



An estimated 820 breeding black guillemots rely on the rich feeding grounds encompassed by the Marine Protected Area (MPA), approximately 2.2% of the British population. Unlike other auks that feed offshore, the black guillemot is typically found feeding close inshore, and rarely disperses far from its breeding areas, even in winter. Black guillemots normally nest in crevices on cliffs but on the Monach Isles they use other concealed locations like rabbit burrows in the dunes. They lay two eggs, usually in about mid- to late May. Black guillemots that nest on the Monach Isles are protected by an existing Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).



© Crown copyright and database right 2014. All rights reserved.  
Ordnance Survey Licence number 100017908 © Intermap

Location: 57° 31.485' N 007° 38.281' W

Area: 62 km<sup>2</sup>



Black guillemot

## Protected Features & Conservation Objectives

Biodiversity: black guillemot.

Geodiversity: Marine Geomorphology of the Scottish Shelf Seabed; Quaternary of Scotland.

The aim is to **conserve these features** in order to make a long lasting contribution to the MPA network.

During the last ice age, the Monach Isles were completely covered by a sheet of ice resulting in extensive erosion, leaving behind a large, flat area or region of areal glacial scour. Only subtle surface undulations remain in the landscape, reflecting varying rock strength, where harder rocks were more able to withstand the erosion, thus forming slightly higher ground. When the ice sheets melted at the end of the ice age the Atlantic Ocean inundated parts of the landscape. To the west of the Outer Hebrides this created a wave-exposed, shallow submarine shelf where kelp and shellfish thrive in the clear, cold, nutrient-rich waters. Over the last few thousand years shells from deceased marine life have produced large banks of calcium rich shell sand here, which have been moved by strong tides, waves and winds to form the dunes and machair of the Monach Isles.

The MPA overlaps the marine part of the existing Monach Isles Special Area of Conservation (SAC), designated for dunes, machair and breeding grey seals. The islands are also an existing Special Protection Area (SPA) for breeding birds including common terns, little terns and Greenland barnacle geese.

# Further Information

Further information on Nature Conservation MPAs, the wider network and protected areas management is available at [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork)

For Nature Conservation MPA site documents and more on the fascinating range of marine life to be found in Scotland's seas, please visit

[www.snh.gov.uk/mpas](http://www.snh.gov.uk/mpas) - for territorial waters

[www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/scottishmpas](http://www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/scottishmpas) - for offshore waters



The Scottish  
Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

marinescotland



Scottish Natural Heritage  
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba  
All of nature for all of Scotland  
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad



Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Machair

