

CITATION

LOCH OF ISBISTER AND THE LOONS SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

Orkney Islands

Site code: 1031

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: HY 254240

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 6
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 463

AREA: 105 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological:	Fens:	Basin fen
	Birds:	Breeding bird assemblage
		Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>), breeding

DESCRIPTION:

Loch of Isbister and the Loons Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located on the west mainland, between Marwick and Twatt, in the parish of Birsay. The site is a wetland site of national importance for its botanical and ornithological interest.

The Loch of Isbister and the Loons has developed into Orkney's best basin-mire complex as peripheral vegetation has encroached into the open water of Loch of Isbister. The site in particular contains excellent examples of vegetation that forms on the margins of lochs. The variety of bog habitats support a very rich assemblage of wetland plants including autumnal water-starwort, slender-leaved pondweed and the regionally scarce fragrant orchid.

The rich habitat provides a nationally important breeding ground for a range of birds including: wigeon *Anas Penelope*, mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, teal *Anas crecca*, tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*, red breasted merganser *Mergus serrator*, shoveler *Anas clypeata* and shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*. The site is also notified for its nationally important breeding population of pintail, supporting on average 6% of the British population.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1949 Act: 1973 (as Loch of Isbister)

Re-notified under the 1981 Act: 10 May 1983

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 01 March 2011

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 104.5 ha).

Loch of Isbister and the Loons SSSI is designated as Loch of Isbister Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for the European habitats and species listed below.

Habitats : Naturally nutrient-rich lakes or lochs which are often dominated by pondweed
: Very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface
Species : Otter (*Lutra lutra*)