CITATION

MERRICK KELLS
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

Dumfries and Galloway / South Ayrshire / East Ayrshire

Site code: 1148

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NX450840, NX510860

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 77
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 318

AREA: 8767.62 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Geological: Quaternary geology and geomorphology: Quaternary of Scotland
Geological: Igneous petrology: Caledonian Igneous

Biological:	Bogs:	Blanket bog
Biological:	Upland habitats:	Upland assemblage
Biological:	Birds:	Breeding bird assemblage
Biological:	Dragonflies:	Blue aeshna dragonfly *Aeshna caerulea*
Biological:	Invertebrates:	Beetles

DESCRIPTION

Merrick Kells Site of Special Scientific Interest lies 15 kilometres north of Newton Stewart and consists of two parts: the larger part is dominated by the Merrick in the west and the smaller part by the Rhinns of Kells to the east. The site contains the most important and varied system of patterned blanket bog in Britain. It is the most extensive unafforested upland area in Galloway.

Within Merrick Kells SSSI there are two important end-moraine complexes (ridges of unconsolidated debris deposited at the end of a glacier), a rare landform in the Southern Uplands. The Tauchers moraine complex, in particular, is unique in terms of its size and multiple forms. These moraines may provide critical information regarding the climatic conditions during the Loch Lomond glacial re-advance and, together with the sediments of Loch Dungeon, provide important evidence of the Flandrian vegetational history of SW Scotland (which occurred some 17,000-18,000 years ago).

Loch Dungeon also has some of the best fossil pine remains in SW Scotland. Additionally, Craignaw is geomorphologically interesting for its extent of bare granite and its summit of unfissured granite pavements with numerous perched blocks, and as the catchment area for the Silver Flowe bog system.

The site includes the Silver Flowe. This is the most southerly development of oceanic blanket bog vegetation with *Racomitrium* hummock characteristics and the best example of aligned hummock-hollow systems in Britain. The Silver Flowe is an important site for studying bog hydrology.

The mix of granite, sedimentary rocks and morainic deposits provides a high diversity of upland habitats, which, along with the extremely humid oceanic climate, support a number of higher plant species and bryophytes not normally found south of the Highland Boundary Fault. These include a rare hawkweed *Hieracium holosericeum*, downy willow *Salix lapponum*, alpine saw-wort *Saussurea alpina*, purple saxifrage *Saxifraga oppositifolia*, and the localised liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea* and moss *Campylopus setifolius*. The blue aeshna (or azure hawker) dragonfly *Aeshna caerulea,* is recorded at its most southerly location in Scotland.

The bogs also contain a number of rare or locally scarce beetles, including the Nationally Scarce beetles *Cyphon kongsbergensis*, *Hydroporus longicornis* and *Enochrus ochropterus*, and spiders *Clubiona norvegica* and *Zora nemoralis.*

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

Parts of Merrick Kells SSSI were first notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 in 1954, 1956 and 1968 as four separate SSSIs – Merrick SSSI, Craignaw SSSI, Corserine SSSI & Silver Flowe NNR.

Re-notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981: 04 September 1986 as Merrick – Kells SSSI incorporating the four previously notified sites and significantly extended with a 996 ha increase in area.

Notification reviewed under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004: 12 February 2010.

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 8924.8 ha).
Sitename amended to Merrick Kells SSSI.

Most of Merrick Kells SSSI is also designated as Merrick Kells Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for the European habitats and species listed below.

Habitats:
- Acid peat-stained lakes and ponds
- Acidic scree
- Blanket bog
- Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels
- Depressions on peat substrates
- Dry heaths
- Montane acid grasslands
- Plants in crevices on acid rocks
- Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath

Species:
- Otter *Lutra lutra*