

CITATION

**MONACH ISLES
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST
Western Isles**

Site code: 1178

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NF593628, NF626623, NF661630

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 22
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 454

AREA: 598.08 ha.

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological: Coastlands: Machair

Coastlands: Sand dune

Birds: Breeding bird assemblage

Birds: Black guillemot *Cephus grylle*, breeding

Birds: Greenland barnacle goose *Branta leucopsis*, non-breeding

DESCRIPTION:

The five islands that form the Monach Isles lie approximately 8km west of North Uist. They contain machair and sand dune habitats and support populations of breeding birds, including breeding black guillemots. It is also important for wintering barnacle geese.

The sand dunes and machair lie on a low platform of Lewisian rock and include the best examples of uncultivated machair nationally. The strandline and embryo dune zones are frequently absent and the dunes are characterised by narrow mobile dune zones. The machair consists of fixed dunes, machair plain and include a mosaic of wet and dry areas. The uncultivated machair is rich in typical plant species including lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, sand sedge *Carex arenaria* and bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*.

The Isles hold more than 1% of the GB population of wintering Greenland barnacle geese and in summer about 2% of the GB population of black guillemots breed here. The assemblage of breeding birds is one of the best in the Western Isles containing waders such as oystercatcher, ringed plover, lapwing, redshank and snipe, and seabirds such as black-headed gull, Arctic tern and little tern.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1949 Act: 1961

Re-notified under the 1981 Act: 12 December 1983

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 15 September 2009

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 577 ha).

Monach Isles SSSI is also designated as part of the Monach Islands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for the European habitats and species listed below and as Monach Islands Special Protection Area (SPA) for the birds listed below.

Habitats: Dune grassland
Machair
Shifting dunes with marram

Species: Grey seal *Halichoerus grypus*

Birds: Greenland barnacle goose *Branta leucopsis*, non-breeding
Common tern *Sterna hirundo*, breeding
Little tern *Sterna albifrons*, breeding