

## CITATION

### **RICKLE CRAIG - SCURDIE NESS SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST**

Angus

Site code: 1351

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NO 730550

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 54  
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 382

AREA: 72.17 hectares

## NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

**Geological: Igneous petrology: Old Red Sandstone igneous  
Mineralogy: Mineralogy of Scotland**

**Biological: Coastlands: Saltmarsh  
Coastlands: Maritime cliff  
Invertebrates: Mollusc assemblage**

## DESCRIPTION

Rickle Craig - Scurdie Ness SSSI is located on the Angus coastline, stretching approximately 5 km from just north of Lunan Bay to the mouth of the River South Esk at Montrose. This rocky stretch of coastline is of particular importance for the range of saltmarsh communities present and for the examples of unimproved and species-rich maritime cliff grassland vegetation which support a wide range of uncommon plants. These areas of rich vegetation also support a diverse mollusc fauna. The site also contains important examples of exposures of igneous rocks of Devonian age which includes an area where the mineralogy of agates can be studied.

The best exposures of the Ferryden Lavas, a sequence of basalts and andesites that are the earliest expression of volcanic activity associated with the Montrose Volcanic Centre, and are intercalated with sediments of the Arbuthnott Group of Lower Devonian age. The oldest lavas, at Scurdie Ness, are highly vesicular thin flows (less than 3 metres maximum thickness) with well developed pillow structures. South of Scurdie Ness thicker finer grained olivine-basalt flows predominate and brecciated basal horizons and slaggy, or more rarely ropy, upper surfaces can be seen. This locality is of key significance in reconstructing the palaeovolcanic environment of the Montrose Volcanic Formation.

Scurdie Ness is also nationally important for the study of agates, nodules of micro-crystalline silica valued for their colourful internal layering. The agates occur not only as loose pebbles but also embedded within basalt lava rock. This provides important opportunities for investigating how they formed. Their origin from silica-rich groundwaters permeating the rock can be deduced, but the development of the layering is not yet fully understood.

Small areas of saltmarsh occur along the whole length of the SSSI, occurring mainly as beach-head or 'perched' saltmarshes on rocky ground, on or just below the high water line. Beach-head saltmarsh is very rare along the Angus and Dundee coastline and the examples present contrast with the estuarine saltmarsh formed on silty ground on the fringes of the Montrose Basin. A variety of different saltmarsh communities have been identified and they contain a number of species of note such as sea sedge *Carex maritima*, saltmarsh flat-sedge *Blysmus rufus* and distant sedge *Carex distans*.

Species-rich grassland vegetation, reflecting the base-rich nature of the underlying rock occurs mainly on the Rickle Craig and at scattered localities further along the coast, notably on and around the old lime kiln on Boddin Point. Such grassland is very rare in Angus and Dundee districts, occurring elsewhere only as tiny fragments such as on the cliffs between Whiting Ness and Ethie Haven. Characteristic plants include kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, clustered bellflower *Campanula glomerata*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum*, carline thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, burnet saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga* and the nationally scarce Nottingham catchfly *Silene nutans*.

These areas are also noted for their rich snail fauna, with over 30 species recorded including the lesser bulin *Merdigera obscura*, which is relatively scarce in Scotland.

## **NOTIFICATION HISTORY**

First notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949: 1974 as Boddin Point – Scurdie Ness SSSI

Re-notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981: 27 August 1987 as Rickle Craig to Scurdie Ness SSSI

Notification reviewed under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004:  
06 October 2010

## **REMARKS**

Measured area of site corrected (from 73.1 ha).

Sitename amended to Rickle Craig - Scurdie Ness SSSI