

CITATION

RUM SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST Highland (Lochaber)

Site code: 1396

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NM 370980

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 32, 39
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 397

AREA: 10,835.33 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES:

Geological	:	Igneous petrology	Tertiary igneous
	:	Quaternary geology and geomorphology	Quaternary of Scotland
Biological	:	Upland habitats	Upland assemblage
	:	Coastlands	Maritime cliff
	:	Non-vascular plants	Bryophyte assemblage
	:	Vascular plants	Vascular plant assemblage
	:	Birds	Manx shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i>
	:	Invertebrates	Invertebrate assemblage

DESCRIPTION:

Rum Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) encompasses most of the Isle of Rum and has several biological and two geological features of national importance. Rum is one of the Small Isles, a group of Inner Hebridean islands located just off the Lochaber coast west of Mallaig.

The coastline of Rum is mainly rocky whilst its interior comprises mountains and moorland with burns and lochs. The mountains rise to 812m and support an assemblage of upland habitats which comprise a range of montane and sub-montane grassland, dwarf shrub heath and mire communities. The distribution of soils and vegetation is determined by three major rock types: acid Torridonian sandstone; calcareous basalt and Triassic limestone; and a complex of magnesium-rich ultra basic igneous rocks. The vegetation also reflects the long occupation of the island by people; grazing and burning have resulted in an almost treeless landscape except for plantations and fragments of natural woodland in gorges.

There are seven outstanding geological areas within Rum SSSI, six of which are Tertiary Igneous, containing lavas, ultra basic rocks and the best occurrence in Britain of the full suite of acid igneous rocks, together with associated faults, tuffs and tertiary sediments.

The seventh area, representing the Quaternary period, is found in the Western Hills of Rum. It is part of a network of periglacial landform sites in Scotland and encompasses a superb assemblage of relict and active periglacial features. In particular the site is noted for its blockfields and blockslopes; soliflucted boulder sheets and lobes; and sorted circles and sorted stripes, all of which are most likely to have formed during the Loch Lomond Stadial (11,500-10,000 BP). In addition, the site's landforms clearly demonstrate the role of bedrock mineral composition in determining the extent of frost weathering.

The seven geologically significant areas are of importance because they provide an insight into the role of past earth movements and past and present climatic regimes in controlling the form of the features which have developed.

The vegetation types on the basic and ultra basic soils include fertile *Agrostis-Festuca* and Calaminarian grasslands for which Rum is one of the best sites in the UK. The *Agrostis-Festuca* grasslands are more scattered and more varied ecologically than on the basalt sites elsewhere in Scotland and the Calaminarian grasslands are amongst the UK's most maritime-influenced. Acid grasslands are also present. At higher altitudes there are expanses of dwarf-shrub dominated Alpine and sub-alpine heaths and sparse alpine moss heath. The dry heath communities of Rum are some of the most extensive or species-rich dry heath assemblages in Scotland. Rum has an extensive development of northern Atlantic wet heath including the black bog-rush rich form that is restricted to western Scotland. The presence of black bog-rush with other fen species occurring in extensive sheets running down-slope is peculiar to Rum. The blanket bog communities are the most extensive in North Lochaber. The dominant vegetation on shallow peat is heather, deer grass and purple moor grass while on deeper peat, cotton grass and deer grass are dominant and *Sphagnum*-rich pools are widespread. The blanket bog also supports hollows with abundant white-beaked sedge. Most of the characteristic western Highland sub-montane soligenous mire types are present. Nutrient-poor lochs and lochans occur across the island and the macrophyte flora of some reflects a strong maritime influence. Rock habitats include both base-rich and acidic rock faces, ledges, crevices, and scree. Taken together this assemblage of habitats forms one of the best mosaics of upland habitats in the UK.

Submaritime grasslands and heaths associated with the sea cliffs and containing species such as buck's-horn plantain and thrift are among the best in the UK and are widely distributed on cliff tops and above beaches.

Associated with the montane, sub-montane and coastal habitats is a wide variety of rare vascular and lower plants. The upland and montane flora of the ultrabasic rock habitats is especially rich. Components of the vascular plant assemblage include Arctic sandwort *Arenaria norvegica*, brown beak-sedge *Rhynchospora fusca* and pyramidal bugle *Ajuga pyramidalis*. The non-vascular plant flora of Rum is also rich and the bryophyte assemblage includes notable species such as *Acrobolbus wilsonii*, *Bryum dixonii*, *Fossombronia fimbriata*, and *Sphagnum skyense*.

The unique mountain top colony of Manx shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* exceeds 100,000 pairs (about 40% of the British population).

The insect and other invertebrate fauna is rich for a remote island and includes many rare species and Hebridean forms which collectively comprise a nationally important assemblage.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY:

First notified under the 1949 Act as Rhum SSSI: 1958, 1971 and 1974

Re-notified under the 1981 Act: 27 March 1987

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act and site name amended to Rum SSSI:

23 September 2009

Partial denotification confirmed with a reduction of 107.06 ha: 26 March 2010

REMARKS:

Area of the site reduced (from 10,942.39 ha).

Rum SSSI is designated as Rum Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for the European habitats and species listed below. The entire island is designated as Rum Special Protection Area (SPA) for the birds listed below.

Habitats : Acid peat-stained lakes and ponds
: Acidic scree
: Alpine and subalpine heaths
: Base-rich fens
: Base-rich scree

- : Blanket bog
- : Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels
- : Depressions on peat substrates
- : Dry heaths
- : Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals
- : Plants in crevices on acid rocks
- : Plants in crevices on base-rich rocks
- : Species-rich grassland with mat-grass in upland areas
- : Tall herb communities
- : Vegetated sea cliffs
- : Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath

Species : Otter *Lutra lutra*

Birds : Breeding seabird assemblage
: Golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*
: Guillemot *Uria aalge*
: Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*
: Manx shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*
: Red-throated diver *Gavia stellata*