

CITATION

**TORRIDON FOREST
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST**
Highland (Wester Ross)

Site code: 1550

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NG 930580

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 19, 24, 25
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 428, 433, 429

AREA: 5800.78 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

**Geological: Quaternary geology and geomorphology: Quaternary of Scotland
Geomorphology: Mass movement**

**Biological: Upland habitats: Subalpine calcareous grassland
Subalpine dry heath
Alpine heath
Alpine moss heath and associated vegetation
Siliceous scree (includes boulder fields)**

Vascular plants: Vascular plant assemblage

**Invertebrates: Sawflies, wasps and ants
Spiders
Beetles**

DESCRIPTION

Torridon Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) encompasses the mountains Beinn Alligin, Liathach and Ruadh-stac Mòr to the north of the village of Torridon and Sgurr Dubh and Coire a'Cheud-Chnoic 8 km to the east. This range of mountains exhibit typical western upland communities with evidence of low burning pressure. The predominantly north-facing aspect of the site includes superb corries with dramatic cliffs. The site is notified for both biological and geomorphological features.

Coire a'Cheud Chnoic (the valley of a hundred hills) in the eastern part of the site is nationally known as a classic geomorphological locality; it displays one of the best, most accessible and most familiar examples of hummocky moraine in Scotland. It is a key site for reconstructing the behaviour of a glacier that formerly covered the area during the Loch Lomond Stadial some 11-10,000 years ago. In the western part of the site, the west side of Coire Mhic Nobuil displays a particularly fine example of paired lateral moraines (ridges of glacial sediment deposited along the sides of the glacier) and one of the best examples of a medial moraine in the northern Highlands runs down valley from the northern limb of the Beinn Alligin ridge. In addition to the glacial activity that has occurred on site, Scotland's largest and finest example of a rock avalanche fell as a massive rock fall from the south face of Sgurr Mòr, in Coire

Toll a'Mhadaidh Mór, nearly 4000 years ago. It travelled some 1.25km across the corrie floor and deposited over 8.3×10^6 tonnes of boulders and rock debris.

The range of important upland habitats includes subalpine calcareous grassland, alpine and subalpine dry heath, alpine moss heath and siliceous screes. Several of the plant communities are restricted to the NW Highlands and associated with oceanic conditions. The communities on the north-facing slopes of Sgurr Dhubh, Liathach and Beinn Alligin are rich in Atlantic liverworts and the upper slopes of these mountains also have extensive rock and ablation surfaces where *Racomitrium* moss heath occurs widely with dwarf willow abundant. There are patches of herb-rich grassland on the south side of Liathach and Coire Toll a'Mhadaidh Mór contains an outstanding example of boulder field scree, created by the rock avalanche, where moss-heath has been colonised by birch and rowan, and is interspersed with herb-rich grassland. Numerous mounds and hummocks on the lower ground support a characteristic patchwork of heath and bog communities.

The varied mountain flora includes a number of rare vascular plant species including tufted saxifrage *Saxifraga cespitosa*, curved woodrush *Luzula arcuata*, arctic mouse ear *Cerastium arcticum*, northern rock-cress *Arabis petraea* and rock whitlow grass *Draba norvegica*.

Nationally rare invertebrate species are associated with habitats on the site including the leaf beetle *Phyllodecta polaris*, the sawfly *Pachynematus moerens* and the spider *Erigone psychrophila*.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1949 Act as Liathach (Coire Mhic Fhearchair) SSSI: 1974
Re-notified under the 1981 Act as Torridon Forest SSSI: 2 July 1986 with a 2098.6 ha increase in area.

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 28 April 2010

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected from 5872.6 ha.

Torridon Forest SSSI is part of Loch Maree Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for the European habitats and species listed below:

Habitats:

- Acidic scree
- Alder woodland on floodplains
- Alpine and subalpine heaths
- Blanket bog
- Bog woodland
- Caledonian forest
- 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
Plants in crevices on base-rich rocks
Tall herb communities
Western acidic oak woodland
Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath

Species: Otter *Lutra lutra*