

## CITATION

### LOCH URIGILL SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST Highland (Sutherland)

Site code: 1668

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NC 242102

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 15  
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 439

AREA: 325.29 ha

## NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

**Biological:** Freshwater habitats: Oligo-mesotrophic loch

**Birds:** Black-throated diver *Gavia arctica*

**Birds:** Breeding bird assemblage

## DESCRIPTION

Loch Urigill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located 2km east of Elphin in northwest Sutherland. The loch is nationally important as an example of a nutrient-poor loch which shows some enrichment and for the range of birds that breed here. The site is internationally important for breeding black-throated diver.

**Oligo-mesotrophic loch:** Loch Urigill has properties of both nutrient-poor and slightly enriched lochs, possibly as a result of the influence from both the surrounding limestone geology and the heath and peatland vegetation. It is unusually rich in plant species with eight species of pondweed having been recorded, including the nationally scarce long-stalked pondweed *Potamogeton praelongus*. The shallow waters around the edge of the loch, together with some of the open water areas, support a particularly diverse range of plant species. Submerged species, including shore-weed *Littorella uniflora*, alternate water-milfoil *Myriophyllum alterniflorum*, floating bur-reed *Sparganium angustifolium*, awlwort *Subularia aquatica* and three species of bladderwort *Utricularia* spp are abundant at this site.

**Black-throated diver:** The islands on Loch Urigill are regularly used as nesting sites by up to two pairs of black-throated divers. These two pairs represent more than 1% of the British breeding population.

**Breeding bird assemblage:** The loch, its islands and margins are also important for the birdlife they support. Waterfowl which breed by the loch include wigeon, tufted duck, mallard and teal. Ringed plover and common sandpiper breed around its margins. The surrounding heath and mires also support a wide range of species, particularly waders, including greenshank, dunlin, redshank, curlew and golden plover.

## NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1981 Act: 18 November 1996

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 29 January 2009

## REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 322 ha).

Loch Urigill SSSI is part of Inverpolly, Loch Urigill and Nearby Lochs Special Protection Area (SPA) designated for black-throated diver (*Gavia arctica*).