

CITATION

RIVER BORGIE SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST Highland (Sutherland)

Site code: 1685

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NC 665575

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 10
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 448

AREA: 32.28 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological: Invertebrates: Freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*

DESCRIPTION

The River Borgie Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies on the north coast of Sutherland between Bettyhill and Tongue. The site has been designated as an SSSI for its nationally important population of freshwater pearl mussel.

The site covers the entire length of the river from Loch Slaim to the sea at Torrisdale Bay. The river channel itself and some areas of the riverbank are included in the site.

Freshwater pearl mussels have been declining in numbers across their European range and Scotland is seen as a stronghold for this species. The River Borgie has been ranked as one of the top three sites in Scotland for this species.

The populations of Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar* and trout *Salmo trutta*, river bed substrates and high water quality of the River Borgie are all crucial to the long-term survival of freshwater pearl mussels. Young freshwater pearl mussels depend on juvenile salmon and trout for their survival and require high water quality and suitable river bed substrates in which to live. The riverside habitats such as areas of birch *Betula pubescens*, alder *Alnus glutinosa* and willow *Salix* spp. provide shaded stretches of water, a supply of leaf litter and insects that are beneficial to salmon and trout, and therefore to the freshwater pearl mussel population in the River Borgie.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1981 Act: 17 March 1998

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 23 April 2009

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 32 ha).

The River Borgie SSSI is also designated as the River Borgie Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for the European species listed below.

- Species : Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*)
- : Freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*)
- : Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

/see overleaf

Part of the River Borgie SSSI overlaps part of West Borgie SSSI which is designated for the geological and biological features listed below:

- Igneous petrology : Caledonian igneous
- Bogs : Blanket bog
- Birds : Breeding bird assemblage

The same part of River Borgie SSSI that overlaps part of West Borgie SSSI also overlaps part of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC designated for the European habitats and species listed below and overlaps part of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Protection Area (SPA) designated for the birds listed below:

- Habitats : Acid peat-stained lakes and ponds
- : Blanket bog
- : Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels
- : Depressions on peat substrates
- : Very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface
- : Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath
- Species : Marsh saxifrage (*Saxifraga hirculus*)
- : Otter (*Lutra lutra*)
- Birds : Black-throated diver (*Gavia arctica*)
- : Common scoter (*Melanitta nigra*)
- : Dunlin (*Calidris alpina schinzii*)
- : Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)
- : Golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)
- : Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)
- : Hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)
- : Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)
- : Red-throated diver (*Gavia stellata*)
- : Short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*)
- : Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)
- : Wood sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*)

The mouth of the River Borgie SSSI overlaps part of Invernaver SSSI which is designated for the geological and biological features listed below:

- Geomorphology : Coastal geomorphology of Scotland
- Coastlands : Saltmarsh
- Coastlands : Sand dune
- Upland habitats : Upland assemblage (plant communities)
- Vascular plants : Vascular plant assemblage

The same part of River Borgie SSSI that overlaps part of Invernaver SSSI also overlaps part of Invernaver SAC designated for the European habitats listed below:

- Habitats : Alpine and subalpine calcareous grasslands
- : Alpine and subalpine heaths
- : Base-rich fens
- : Coastal dune heathland
- : Dune grassland
- : Dunes with creeping willow
- : Dunes with juniper thicket
- : Shifting dunes with marram

