

CITATION**BERNERAY
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST
Western Isles**

Site code: 1715

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 18
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 454

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NF890875

AREA[/ LENGTH]: 669.6 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological : Coastlands : Machair
: Birds : Greenland Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*, wintering

DESCRIPTION:

Berneray SSSI encompasses the machair system on the west side of the island of Berneray in the Sound of Harris. The machair here is outstandingly rich in flowering plants, mosses and liverworts, and supports a wide variety of breeding and wintering birds, including nationally important populations of wintering Greenland barnacle geese.

The machair on Berneray has the greatest extent and diversity of dune and dune slack communities of all the machair sites in the Outer Hebrides. The wetter communities show an excellent succession from obviously brackish slacks to acidic, peat-influenced poor fen types: from red fescue *Festuca rubra* saltmarsh, to common sedge *Carex nigra* poor fen with bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*.

Two nationally scarce species are important components of the common sedge *Carex nigra* poor fen community on Berneray: baltic rush *Juncus balticus* and variegated horsetail *Equisetum variegatum*. Baltic rush is also present in the machair slacks.

This site also supports the richest bryophyte flora (mosses and liverworts) of all the Outer Hebrides machair sites. Some of these bryophytes have not or only rarely been recorded on the dunes or slacks on machair elsewhere in the Outer Hebrides, for example *Gymnostomum aeruginosum* and *Mnium marginatum*. Several nationally scarce bryophytes are also present, including *Meesia uliginosa*, *Amblyodon dealbatus*, *Porella obtusata* and *Scapania aequiloba*.

The machair grasslands on Berneray support internationally important numbers of barnacle geese in winter. The barnacle geese are from the population which breeds

in Greenland. Many winter in the islands in the Sound of Harris and around the north and west coasts of North Uist.

The site also supports important numbers of waders; however these are not a designated feature of the SSSI. Oystercatcher, ringed plover and redshank are present throughout the year. Lapwing, dunlin and snipe breed on the island and purple sandpiper, sanderling and turnstone overwinter.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1981 Act: 26 October 1999

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 31st March 2010

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 671 ha).

Berneray SSSI is designated as part of North Uist Machair special area of conservation (SAC) for the European habitats and species listed below and as part of North Uist Machair and Islands special protection area (SPA) for the birds listed below.

Habitats: Annual vegetation of drift lines
Atlantic salt meadows
Dune grassland
Humid dune slacks
Machair
Naturally nutrient-rich lakes or lochs which are often dominated by pondweed
Shifting dunes
Shifting dunes with marram

Species: Slender naiad *Najas flexilis*

Birds: Corncrake *Crex crex*, breeding
Dunlin *Calidris alpina schinzii*, breeding
Greenland barnacle goose *Branta leucopsis*, non-breeding
Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, breeding
Purple sandpiper *Calidris maritima*, non-breeding
Redshank *Tringa totanus*, breeding
Ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, breeding & non-breeding
Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, non-breeding