

CITATION

BEN VRACKIE SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

Perth and Kinross

Site code: 194

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NN 950630

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 43

1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 386

AREA: 1875.64 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological: Birds: Breeding bird assemblage
Upland habitats: Upland assemblage
Vascular plants: Vascular plant assemblage

DESCRIPTION:

Ben Vrackie lies 5km to the north of Pitlochry. The mountain is important as it forms part of the series of arctic-alpine sites on calcareous Dalradian schist which lies across the southern Grampians; these sites are amongst the richest botanical montane sites in Britain. The combination of high-altitude, late-lying snow, relatively continental climate and lime-rich rocks has led to the development of a well developed and wide range of alpine flora. Ben Vrackie is important because of its upland vegetation, which includes a number of nationally rare plant species in a wide range of habitats. The site is also important for its upland moorland and grassland breeding birds.

Much of the underlying geology of Ben Vrackie consists of lime-rich schists, limestone and igneous rocks. The most diverse and botanically rich areas in upland plant species occur where these rocks are exposed. Outcrops form crags and ridges which give way to herb-rich communities, and in places, alpine willow scrub including whortle-leaved willow *S. myrsinites*. These crags also provide a habitat for rare species such as purple oxytropis *Oxytropis halleri* and alpine milk-vetch *Astragalus alpinus*, found on only one or two Scottish hills. Ben Vrackie's wide ranging habitats also include flushes rich in sedges and rushes including species like Scottish asphodel *Tofieldia pusilla* and alpine rush *Juncus alpinoarticulatus*. These occur in the wetter areas where calcium-rich ground water reaches the surface.

Ben Vrackie is also important for its ornithological interest. This is largely a result of the site's extensive heathland which provides suitable habitat for a number of moorland breeding birds, including wheatear, stonechat, snipe and red grouse as well as the larger birds of prey often associated with upland moors including, golden eagle, buzzards, hen harriers, merlin, peregrine and short-eared owls.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949: 1955, and again in 1972.

Re-notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981: 15 Dec 1983

Notification reviewed under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004: 9 February 2020

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 1891 ha).