

CITATION

CREAG MEAGAI DH
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST
Highland (Badenoch and Strathspey, Lochaber)

Site code: 457

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NN 445880

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 34, 35 & 42
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 401

AREA: 7033.13 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological

Upland habitats: Rocky slopes (including inland cliff, rocky outcrops, chasmophytic vegetation)
Upland habitats: Upland assemblage
Woodlands: Upland birch woodland
Vascular plants: Vascular plant assemblage
Birds: Breeding bird assemblage

DESCRIPTION

Creag Meagaidh SSSI is located to the north-west of Loch Laggan between Laggan and Spean Bridge in the Central Highlands. This is an outstanding upland site with a wide range of characteristic plant communities and some notable montane plants.

There are magnificent cliffs on the site, notably the massive 400 metre cliffs of Coire Ardair. These cliffs, comprised of both acid and basic rocks, are largely ungrazed and have developed a characteristic flora. Many of the important species within the vascular plant assemblage are associated with these steep and rocky habitats including alpine foxtail *Alopecurus alpinus*, Alpine lady-fern *Athyrium distentifolium*, Norwegian cudweed *Gnaphalium norvegicum*, downy willow *Salix lapponum* and Sibbaldia *Sibbaldia procumbens*

The site supports a diverse mosaic of upland habitats which include alpine moss heaths and their associated vegetation, snowbeds, montane willow scrub, plant communities developed in crevices on rocky slopes and tall herb communities on rocky ledges. The uninterrupted transition of natural and semi-natural vegetation from the shores of Loch Laggan at 250 metres above sea level to the summit of Creag Meagaidh at 1130 metres is also of interest. The broad summit plateau supports extensive blanket bog with large areas of woolly hair moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum* heath and swards of stiff sedge *Carex bigelowii*. The alpine and subalpine heaths support characteristic species such as crowberry *Empetrum nigrum* and dry and wet heaths with species such as heather *Calluna vulgaris* and cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*.

The lower slopes of the site support expanding upland birchwoods. These are species rich in places with melancholy thistle *Cirsium heterophyllum* and northern bedstraw *Galium boreale* and some notable lichens.

The diversity of habitats supports a varied breeding bird assemblage which includes golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, black grouse *Tetrao tetrix*, golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, ring ouzel *Turdus torquatus* and twite *Carduelis flavirostris*. The plateau and the area above 740m is particularly important for breeding dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1949 Act: 1972

Re-notified under the 1981 Act: 12 July 1983 with a decrease in area.

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 9 December 2010

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected from 6984 ha.

Most of Creag Meagaidh SSSI (extending to 6144 ha) is designated as Creag Meagaidh Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for the European habitats listed below. Those parts of Creag Meagaidh SSSI above 740m (extending to 2870 ha) are designated as Creag Meagaidh Special Protection Area (SPA) for the bird species listed below.

Habitats: Acidic scree
 Alpine and subalpine heaths
 Blanket bog
 Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels
 Dry heaths
 Montane acid grasslands
 Mountain willow scrub
 Plants in crevices on acid rocks
 Plants in crevices on base-rich rocks
 Tall herb communities
 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath

Birds: Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*, breeding

Part of Creag Meagaidh SSSI (extending to 5.5 ha) is overlapped by the River Spey Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for the European species listed below:

Species: Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*
 Freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*
 Otter *Lutra lutra*
 Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*