

## CITATION

### EDEN ESTUARY SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

Fife

Site code: 596

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NO 478193

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 59  
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 371, 380

AREA: 1097.88 hectares

## NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

**Biological: Intertidal marine habitats: Mudflats**

**Coastlands: Saltmarsh**

**Coastlands: Sand dunes**

**Woodlands: Scrub**

**Birds: Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), non-breeding**

**Birds: Black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*), non-breeding**

**Birds: Bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), non-breeding**

**Birds: Grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*), non-breeding**

**Birds: Redshank (*Tringa totanus*), non-breeding**

**Birds: Ringed plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*), non-breeding**

**Birds: Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*), non-breeding**

**Birds: Red-breasted merganser (*Mergus serrator*), non-breeding**

**Birds: Common scoter (*Melanitta nigra*), non-breeding**

**Birds: Velvet scoter (*Melanitta fusca*), non-breeding**

**Birds: Scaup (*Aythya marila*), non-breeding**

**Birds: Eider (*Somateria mollissima*), non-breeding**

**Birds: Greylag goose (*Anser anser*), non-breeding**

## DESCRIPTION

The Eden Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies between St Andrews and the Firth of Tay and contains extensive intertidal flats of mud and sand with a rich invertebrate fauna. Nationally or internationally important populations of 13 species of waders and waterfowl occur in winter or on passage. A wide diversity of estuarine and coastal vegetation types are represented, including the largest extent of saltmarsh in Fife.

The extensive mudflats are very varied, with beds of mussels, brown algae and eelgrass. Two nationally scarce species of eelgrass *Zostera angustifolia* and *Z. noltei* are present. The large areas of saltmarsh show good representation of saltmarsh types, from pioneer communities with glasswort *Salicornia europaea* to upper marsh communities with saltmarsh rush *Juncus gerardii* and, locally, saltmarsh flat-sedge *Blysmus rufus* or slender spike-rush *Eleocharis uniglumis*. Fringing the mudflats are locally extensive areas of brackish swamp of sea club-rush

*Bolboschoenus maritimus* and other reedswamp types. In places, these brackish swamps are transitional to freshwater swamp or fen with characteristic species such as hemlock water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* and gipsywort *Lycopus europaeus*.

The outer parts of the estuary, including the West Sands, are largely fringed by sand dunes. Several dune and drift line plant communities are well represented, with several species of plants and insects which are scarce in Fife, such as blue fleabane *Erigeron acer*, oak-leaved goosefoot *Chenopodium glaucum* and the grayling butterfly *Hipparchia semele*.

The uppermost section of the estuary is riverine in character with associated woodland and scrub. The river terrace supports alder-willow swamp woodland with a characteristic ground flora including common nettle *Urtica dioica* and ramsons *Allium ursinum*. This woodland type is scarce and declining in the area. Mixed scrub is abundant on the south side of the valley, with an abundance of the locally rare wood stitchwort *Stellaria nemorum*. Areas of ash-alder flush woodland and freshwater marsh add to the habitat diversity of the site.

Nationally important wintering populations of oystercatcher, black-tailed and bar-tailed godwits, grey plover and redshank use the estuary for feeding and roosting. Many other waders visit the site on passage in spring or autumn, including nationally important numbers of ringed plover. The estuary is of international importance for shelduck in winter and for red-breasted merganser in autumn. Nationally important wintering flocks of common and velvet scoter, scaup and eider occur, principally in St Andrews Bay and near the Eden Mouth. The estuary is also used by nationally important numbers of greylag geese as a nocturnal roost.

The estuary is of regional significance for several other species of waterfowl and waders in winter, including pink-footed geese, wigeon, teal, dunlin and curlew. It is of importance in Fife as a feeding area for young shelduck. A small but diverse population of breeding birds occurs within the site.

## **NOTIFICATION HISTORY**

First notified under the 1949 Act: 1971

Re-notified under the 1981 Act: 16 February 1990 with a 460.7 ha increase in area

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 24 March 2011

## **REMARKS**

Measured area of site corrected (from 1160 ha).

The Eden Estuary SSSI adjoins Earlshall Muir SSSI and Tayport to Tentsmuir Coast SSSI.

The Eden Estuary SSSI is designated as part of the Firth of Tay and Eden Estuary special area of conservation (SAC) for the European habitats and species listed below and as part of the Firth of Tay and Eden Estuary special protection area (SPA) for the birds listed below.

Habitats: Estuaries  
Intertidal mudflats and sandflats  
Subtidal sandbanks

Species: Common seal (*Phoca vitulina*)

Birds: Bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), non-breeding  
Common scoter (*Melanitta nigra*), non-breeding  
Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), non-breeding  
Dunlin (*Calidris alpina alpina*), non-breeding  
Eider (*Somateria mollissima*), non-breeding  
Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), non-breeding  
Goosander (*Mergus merganser*), non-breeding  
Grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*), non-breeding  
Greylag goose (*Anser anser*), non-breeding  
Icelandic Black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa islandica*), non-breeding  
Little tern (*Sternula albifrons*), breeding  
Long-tailed duck (*Clangula hyemalis*), non-breeding  
Marsh harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), breeding  
Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), non-breeding  
Pink-footed goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*), non-breeding  
Red-breasted merganser (*Mergus serrator*), non-breeding  
Redshank (*Tringa totanus*), non-breeding  
Sanderling (*Calidris alba*), non-breeding  
Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*), non-breeding  
Velvet scoter (*Melanitta fusca*), non-breeding  
Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding