

CITATION

FORSINARD BOGS SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST Highland (Sutherland)

Site code: 651

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NC857459

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 10
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 449

AREA: 1509.19 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological: **Bogs:** Blanket bog
Birds: Breeding bird assemblage
Common scoter *Melanitta nigra*, breeding
Golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, breeding
Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, breeding

DESCRIPTION

Forsinard Bogs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) covers an area of blanket bog in the northeast of Sutherland, 1km north of Forsinard. It lies within an expanse of blanket bog that extends across Sutherland and Caithness, forming part of one of the largest continuous tracts of blanket bog in the world. The site is nationally important for its blanket bog habitat and assemblage of breeding birds. The populations of common scoter, golden plover and greenshank that nest here are each nationally important in their own right. Parts of the site are being restored to blanket bog from conifer plantation.

Blanket bog

Forsinard Bogs SSSI is an extensive area of blanket bog, encompassing a range of peatlands, lochans, and pool-and-ridge systems. Watershed mire is the most widespread type of blanket bog on this site. It is found on the relatively flat ground on the broad spurs that cover most of this site and includes very wet areas with dubh lochans. There is a particularly fine example of ladder fen which has formed on sloping ground in the southeast of the site. Distinctive long narrow pools run across the slope, separated by low ridges of vegetation. Typical species found in ladder fen include mud sedge *Carex limosa* and bog pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*.

Much of the blanket bog vegetation is dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris*, hare's-tail cottongrass *Eriophorum vaginatum*, bog myrtle *Myrica gale* and the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea*. The flatter parts of the site are much wetter and rich in *Sphagnum* mosses, including the hummock forming species *S. magellanicum*, *S. fuscum* and the nationally scarce *S. austinii*. Bearberry *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* and the nationally scarce dwarf birch *Betula nana* can also be found on this site.

/see overleaf

Breeding bird assemblage

The extent and diversity of the blanket bog habitat, with its lochs, smaller lochans, peaty pools and small burns, provide ideal conditions for waders and waterbirds to nest and rear their chicks. Species present include black-throated diver, red-throated diver, dunlin, greylag goose, hen harrier and merlin.

Common scoter, golden plover and greenshank

The high breeding densities of golden plover and greenshank are particularly notable. Small lochs and lochans on the site provide habitat for breeding common scoter.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1949 Act: 1975

Re-notified under the 1981 Act: 13 July 1984 with a 2 ha decrease in area

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 25 November 2010

Extension notified under the 2004 Act: 25 August 2022 covering 561 ha

REMARKS

Forsinard Bogs SSSI is part of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for the European habitats and species listed below and is 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*), breeding
: Common scoter (*Melanitta nigra*), breeding
: Dunlin (*Calidris alpina schinzii*), breeding
: Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), breeding
: Golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), breeding
: Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*), breeding
: Hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), breeding
: Merlin (*Falco columbarius*), breeding
: Red-throated diver (*Gavia stellata*), breeding
: Short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*), breeding
: Wigeon (*Anas penelope*), breeding
: Wood sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*), breeding