

## CITATION

### GRIBUN SHORE AND CRAGS SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

Argyll and Bute

Site code: 747

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NM 456355 & NM 451332

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 48  
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 375

AREA: 223.07 hectares

## NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Geological	: Stratigraphy	: Cenomanian - Maastrichtian
	: Stratigraphy	: Permian Triassic (red beds)
Biological	: Coastlands	: Maritime cliff
	: Upland habitats	: Rocky slopes (includes inland cliff, rocky outcrops, chasmophytic vegetation)
	: Upland habitats	: Subalpine calcareous grassland

## DESCRIPTION:

Gribun Shore and Craggs SSSI is located at the mouth of Loch na Keal on the island of Mull. The site provides exposures of sedimentary rocks, dating from the Mesozoic era, including fossil soils and river deposits dating from the Triassic period, and chalk dating from the Cretaceous period. The key exposures are of great interest to the student of Mesozoic palaeogeography and stratigraphy within a multi-interest locality of national importance. The site also features maritime cliff and rocky slopes which support assemblages of arctic/alpine plants at exceptionally low altitudes. Rich calcareous grasslands also occur over the more stable slopes.

Between Balmeanach and Rubha Baile na h-Airde the coastal exposures show a great variety of features typical of the Triassic age Stornoway Formation (overlain by Rhaetian sediments). The unconformity between the Triassic and the much more ancient Moinian metamorphic rocks beneath, is magnificently exposed. The Triassic succession includes a variety of conglomerates formed in alluvial fan and braided stream situations with associated siltstones. Many of the siltstones have well-developed columnar and nodular calcrete profiles (lime-rich portions of ancient soil profiles), often with oolitic or pisolitic textures. Gribun Shores and Craggs is an important site for the demonstration of regional relationships, environments and palaeogeography in Triassic times.

At Gribun a range of Cretaceous sediments including fossiliferous greensand, white sandstone and chalk, ranging from Cenomanian to Maastrichtian in age, occur unconformably above Triassic strata. Representing the Morvern Greensand Formation, the Lochaline White Sandstone Formation and the Gribun Chalk

Formation, these exposures are key to understanding the palaeogeography and palaeoenvironment of the Inner Hebrides. Sand-filled crevices in the youngest Cretaceous deposits are thought to be of Palaeogene age. A number of localities, principally between Clachandhu and Creag Mhor, display fossiliferous outcrops of the Morvern Greensand Formation.

Inland, cliffs and rocky outcrops support a rich assemblage of arctic/alpine plants at exceptionally low altitudes. These assemblages are among the best examples of their type in the district and support a number of notable plant species including mountain avens *Dryas octopetala*, alpine saw-wort *Saussurea alpina*, and moss campion *Silene acaulis* which occurs at sea level.

Stabilised scree slopes are mulched annually by material from the crags above and support herb-rich *Festuca/Agrostis* calcareous grasslands with false brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, wild thyme *Thymus praecox* ssp *arcticus*, kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria* and wood sage *Teucrium scorodonia* on dry slopes, with globe flower *Trollius europaeus* and water avens *Geum rivale* in flushes.

## NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1949 Act: 1963, 1974

Re-notified under the 1981 Act: 24 October 1988 with a net increase in area

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 03 March 2010

## REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected from 231.4ha.

Part of Gribun Shore and Crags SSSI is part of Ardmeanach Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for the European habitats listed below.

Part of Gribun Shore and Crags SSSI is part of Cnuic agus Cladach Mhuile Special Protection Area (SPA) designated for the birds listed below.

Habitats      Species-rich grassland with mat-grass in upland areas  
                 Tall herb communities  
                 Vegetated sea cliffs

Birds            Golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*