

CITATION

KYLE OF SUTHERLAND MARSHES SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST Highland (Sutherland)

Site code: 885

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NH 515990 & NH 574957

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 20 & 21
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 440 & 441

AREA: 402.76 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological:	Fens:	Flood-plain fen
	Woodlands:	Wet woodland
	Vascular plants:	Vascular plant assemblage

DESCRIPTION

The Kyle of Sutherland Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located between Rosehall and Bonar Bridge in east Sutherland. This is a two part site. The site has been notified for the nationally important floodplain plant communities, woodland and the rare plants that occur on the broad, flat floodplain terraces of the River Oykel.

Flood-plain fen

The floodplain terraces are regularly flooded in winter and support the best examples of floodplain fen habitat in Sutherland. There are extensive areas of wet marshy grassland with some drier areas on the river banks, old embankments and other better drained ground. The main species include bottle sedge *Carex rostrata*, common sedge *C. nigra*, marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, water horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile* and marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*. Some of the areas of fen form quaking mires with transitions to open water. The wettest areas grade into stands of water sedge *Carex aquatilis* and estuarine sedge *Carex recta*.

Extensive areas of wet grassland support tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* and soft-rush *Juncus effusus*, with variable amounts of tall herbs including meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, angelica *Angelica sylvestris* and skull-cap *Scutellaria galericulata*. There are isolated stands of bladder sedge *Carex vesicaria*, yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus* and melancholy thistle *Cirsium heterophyllum* within the marshy grassland. Drier areas have a typical grazed acid grassland flora, with red fescue *Festuca rubra* and mat grass *Nardus stricta*.

Wet woodland

The site includes blocks of wet woodland dominated by a canopy of alder *Alnus glutinosa* on the floodplains, grading into birch woodland on neighbouring drier slopes. The alder woodland has an understory with scattered hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus*. The field layer typically consists of ferns, grasses, sedges and some flowering herbs, such as;

lady fern *Athyrium filix-femina*, creeping soft-grass *Holcus mollis*, remote sedge *Carex remota* and opposite-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*. Fen vegetation can extend beneath the tree canopy and there is gradual transition from flood-plain fen (open fen and wet grassland) to wet woodland habitats throughout the site.

Vascular plant assemblage (flowering plants)

The site supports a nationally important assemblage of plant species. Of particular interest is a large population of the nationally rare estuarine sedge *Carex recta*. Two scarce species, bog orchid *Hammarbya paludosa* and pillwort *Pilularia globulifera*, also grow on this site.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

Western section first notified as Oykel Marshes SSSI under the 1949 Act: 1974
Re-notified as Kyle of Sutherland Marshes SSSI under the 1981 Act: 25 March 1988
with a 76 ha increase in area due to addition of eastern section and amendment of the boundary of the western section
Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 27 August 2009

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 403.7 ha).

Part of the Kyle of Sutherland Marshes SSSI overlaps with part of the River Oykel Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which is designated for the European species listed below.

Species: Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*)
Freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*)