

CITATION

LOCH LEVEN SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST Perth and Kinross

Site code: 993

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NO 145015

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 58
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 369

AREA: 1,611.59 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES:

Biological

Freshwater habitats: Eutrophic loch

Fens: Hydromorphological mire range

Vascular plants: Vascular plant assemblage

Birds: Breeding bird assemblage
Gadwall *Anas strepera*, breeding
Tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*, breeding
Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, non-breeding
Gadwall *Anas strepera*, non-breeding
Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, non-breeding
Greylag goose *Anser anser*, non-breeding
Pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, non-breeding
Pochard *Aythya ferina*, non-breeding
Shoveler *Anas clypeata*, non-breeding
Teal *Anas crecca*, non-breeding
Tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*, non-breeding
Whooper swan *Cygnus cygnus*, non-breeding

Invertebrates: Beetle assemblage

DESCRIPTION:

Loch Leven lies midway between Edinburgh and Perth, in the shadow of the Lomond Hills, to the east of Kinross. The loch is important for its freshwater habitat, which is naturally rich in nutrients (eutrophic), the fen and swamp areas fringing the loch edges, breeding and non-breeding wildfowl and its rare vascular plants and beetles.

Loch Leven is the largest naturally eutrophic loch in lowland Scotland. The nutrient rich, shallow waters, with abundant aquatic plant cover, support a wealth of insects, fish and birds. The range of mire and fen types fringing the loch are comparatively extensive and vary from beds of reed and reed grass to sedge-rich areas, wet grassland, fen meadow and willow scrub. The diversity of plants found around the loch is exceptional with several plants of national and local rarity including holy-grass *Hierochloe odorata* and thread rush *Juncus filiformis*, and although the diversity of the plants within the loch itself declined during the 20th century because of pollution, there is recent evidence of a recovery.

The large expanse of open water, islands and the abundance of food make the loch very attractive to bird life at all times of year, particularly as a stopover during migration periods in spring and autumn. A wide range of wildfowl and other wetland birds breed around the loch, and St Serf's Island supports the highest numbers of breeding wildfowl in inland Europe with up to 1,000 nesting pairs, especially of tufted ducks; numbers of breeding gadwall are also significant. During the autumn, winter and spring months large numbers of cormorant, gadwall, goldeneye, greylag goose, pink-footed goose, pochard, shoveler, teal, tufted duck and whooper swan use the loch for feeding or roosting.

The loch also is home to a variety of rare beetles, most of which live around the shoreline. The rarest beetle, *Thanatophilus dispar*, is a specialist feeder on carrion, such as dead fish or birds.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949: 1956, 1971

Re-notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981: 12 June 1985

Notification reviewed under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004: 29 June 2012

Partial denotification confirmed under the 2004 Act: 29 June 2012 with a 4.38 ha reduction in area

REMARKS

Most of Loch Leven SSSI is designated as Loch Leven Special Protection Area (SPA) for the birds listed below.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, non-breeding
Gadwall *Anas strepera*, non-breeding
Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, non-breeding
Pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, non-breeding
Pochard *Aythya ferina*, non-breeding
Shoveler *Anas clypeata*, non-breeding
Teal *Anas crecca*, non-breeding
Tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*, non-breeding
Whooper swan *Cygnus cygnus*, non-breeding
Waterfowl assemblage non-breeding