

EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds

**SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA (SPA) CITATION  
FOR PUBLIC ISSUE**

**PENTLAND FIRTH ISLANDS, ORKNEY (113A)**

Pentland Firth Islands SPA consists of the small uninhabited islands of Swona and Muckle Skerry situated in the Pentland Firth between South Ronaldsay and mainland Scotland. The islands are low-lying with cliffs and rocky shorelines. Above the shore the islands support a variety of habitats including maritime heath, rough grassland, marsh and open freshwater.

The boundaries of the SPA follow the boundary of the Pentland Firth Islands SSSI

Pentland Firth Islands SPA qualifies under **Article 4.1** by regularly supporting a nationally important breeding population of the Annex 1 species Arctic tern *Sterna paradisaea* (1,000 prs in 1995; 2% of the British breeding population).

**Non-qualifying interest:**

The site is of additional interest for its overall breeding seabird assemblage and regularly supports about 7,700 individuals of 16 species. In addition to Arctic tern the assemblage includes the Annex I species storm petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* (2 pairs on Muckle Skerry) and sandwich tern *Sterna sandicensis* (200 pairs on MS); and the regularly occurring migratory species fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* (815 pairs; 650 Swona, 165 MS), shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* (84 pairs; 34 S, 50 MS), Arctic skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* (1 pair on S), black-headed gull *Larus ridibundus* (49 pairs; 14 S, 35 MS), common gull *L. canus* (100 pairs; 10 S, 90 MS), lesser black-backed gull *L. fuscus* (15 pairs on MS), herring gull *L. argentatus* (17 pairs; 7 S, 10 MS), great black-backed gull *L. marinus* (56 pairs; 54 S, 2 MS), kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* (710 pairs; 230 S, 480 MS), guillemot *Uria aalge* (220 individuals; 70 S, 150 MS), razorbill *Alca torda* (190 individuals; 90 S, 100 MS), black guillemot *Cephus grylle* (120 individuals; 80 S, 40 MS) and puffin *Fratercula arctica* (370 individuals; 90 S, 280 MS).

Counts of species on Swona are for 1986 apart from black guillemot (1984) and Arctic skua, black-headed gull and great black-backed gull (1995). Counts of species on Muckle Skerry are for 1986 apart from shag, kittiwake, guillemot & razorbill (1991) and sandwich tern and gulls (1993).

Digital Area: 166 Ha

National Grid Reference: Swona ND 388844, Muckle Skerry ND 465783

OS Sheet 1:50,000 - 7

June 1998 Revamp

NATURA 2000

Scottish Natural Heritage