

CITATION

LOCH OF STRATHBEG

Aberdeenshire

Site code: 1040

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NK074595

OS 1: 50 000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 30
1: 25 000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 427

AREA: 953.9 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Geological	: Geomorphology	: Coastal Geomorphology of Scotland
Biological	: Coastlands	: Sand dune
		: Saltmarsh
	: Freshwater habitats	: Eutrophic loch
	Fens	: Open water transition fen
		: Fen-meadow
	: Birds	: Breeding bird assemblage
		: Pink-footed goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> , non-breeding
		: Greylag goose <i>Anser anser</i> , non-breeding
		: Whooper swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> , non-breeding
		: Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i> , non-breeding

DESCRIPTION

The Loch of Strathbeg is located on the north-east coast of Scotland, 10 km south-east of Fraserburgh.

GEOLOGY

Strathbeg is a key geomorphological site for its extensive and varied dune topography. It provides one of the best active examples in Scotland of progradational (accretionary) processes that produce parallel lines of dunes separated by linear depressions and contains some of the most impressive instances of erosional processes in large scale coastal dune ridges to be found anywhere in the country. The massive high dunes contain spectacular blowouts cut down to a basement of raised beach shingle and in places extensive deflation surfaces have been produced by the coalescence of major blowouts. As a relatively undisturbed area, Strathbeg presents valuable opportunities to study these and other processes of land form evolution in a comparatively natural setting. Additional interest in the site is provided by a variety of raised shoreline features. Strathbeg is therefore an outstanding site for studies in coastal geomorphology.

BIOLOGY

The Loch of Strathbeg is one of the most important sites for passage and wintering wildfowl in Britain. The numbers of whooper swan and greylag and pink-footed geese

are of international importance, representing 1% of Icelandic, 6% of Icelandic and 25% of total Icelandic/Greenlandic populations respectively. In addition, nationally important concentrations of goldeneye frequently occur. Overall, the number of over-wintering waterfowl is of international importance.

During the breeding season the loch and adjacent areas supports a particularly diverse breeding bird community including mute swan, shelduck, redshank, teal, tufted duck, water rail, common tern, marsh harrier, sedge and grasshopper warblers and reed bunting.

The loch itself is the largest waterbody in the north-east lowlands and is the largest dune lake in Britain. It is a particularly good example of a shallow and naturally eutrophic (nutrient-rich) open water body, with an unusual water chemistry and biology. The adjacent loch shores, reed beds, freshwater marshes, and alder and willow carr contain a rich flora with a large number of regional and national rarities such as the flat-stalked pondweed *Potamogeton friesii*. Slender-leaved pondweed *Potamogeton filiformis* and creeping spearwort *Ranunculus reptans* have also been recorded. In addition, extensive areas of semi-fixed dunes, fixed calcareous dune grassland and dune slacks are found, along with saltmarsh. The dunes contain a rich flora.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1949 Act: 1971.

Notified under the 1981 Act: 3 July 1985, with a 69.6 ha an increase in area.

Re-notified under the 1981 Act: 14 November 1991.

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 6 October 2011.

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 913.18 ha).

The Loch of Strathbeg SSSI is designated as the Loch of Strathbeg Special Protection Area (SPA), for the birds listed below.

Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding

Greylag goose *Anser anser*, non-breeding

Pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, non-breeding

Sandwich tern *Sterna sandvicensis*, breeding

Svalbard barnacle goose *Branta leucopsis*, non-breeding

Teal *Anas crecca*, non-breeding

Whooper swan *Cygnus cygnus*, non-breeding