

CITATION

ACHANALT MARSHES
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST
Highland (Easter Ross and Cromarty)

Site code: 12

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NH 265613

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 20
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 436

AREA: 208.25 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Biological:	Freshwater habitats:	Mesotrophic loch
	Fens:	Flood-plain fen
	Birds:	Breeding bird assemblage

DESCRIPTION

General

Achanalt Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies 7 km west of the village of Lochluichart and south of the A832 Garve – Achnasheen road in central Ross-shire. The SSSI includes the water bodies of Loch Achanalt and Loch Odhar and the surrounding floodplain of the River Bran – all at an altitude of 120 metres. This site has extensive semi-natural flood plain habitats supporting a diverse assemblage of wetland breeding birds.

Mesotrophic loch

Loch Achanalt is a good example of a neutral and moderately nutrient-rich water body. Open water plants include the commonly occurring isoetids (small, submerged plants with short stiff leaves and large roots) such as water awlwort *Subularia aquatica*, shoreweed *Littorella uniflora*, water lobelia *Lobelia dortmanna* and lake quillwort *Isoetes lacustris*. Fennel pondweed *Potamogeton pectinatus*, which is an important characteristic pondweed species is also present. The loch also supports the nationally scarce six-stamened waterwort *Elatine hexandra*, which is an open water species, and lesser marshwort *Apium inundatum* which is submerged in shallow water.

Emergent vegetation is restricted to the western fringe, where common club rush *Schoenoplectus lacustris* is dominant with patches of bottle sedge *Carex rostrata*, bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and common spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris*. The nationally rare water sedge *Carex aquatilis* grows on the banks of the River Bran and nationally scarce pillwort *Pilularia globulifera* occurs on the loch margins. Loch Odhar is almost wholly covered with swamp vegetation dominated by bottle sedge, slender sedge *C. lasiocarpa* and water sedge.

Flood-plain fen

Achanalt Marshes support a good example of flood-plain fen habitats. Two waterlogged sedge / rush communities occur extensively and their distribution within the site is dictated by varying water levels. In permanently wet areas, base-poor marsh grassland occurs, dominated by bottle sedge, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*. On relatively drier areas short grass / sedge communities occur where water-logging is mainly a winter phenomenon. This community is dominated by sedges such as common sedge *Carex nigra*, carnation sedge *C. panicea* and star sedge *C. echinata*.

Breeding bird assemblage

The open water and fen habitats, as well as the grassland, mire and heath habitats on site support an exceptionally rich array of nesting wildfowl and waders. Waders breeding on the site include: golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, common sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, wood sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, dunlin *Calidris alpina*, curlew *Numenius arquata*, snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*. Wildfowl breeding on the site include: goosander *Mergus merganser*, red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator*, mute swan *Cygnus olor*, wigeon *Anas penelope*, tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*, teal *Anas crecca* and mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1981 Act: 18 May 1989

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 29 September 2010

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected from 214.6ha.

Achanalt Marshes SSSI is also classified as a Special Protection Area (SPA) which is designated for the bird listed below:

Birds: Wood sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*), breeding