

CITATION

CORRIESHALLOCH GORGE SSSI
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST
Highland (Wester Ross)

Site code: 405

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NH 202781

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

AREA: 6.93 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Geological: Quaternary geology and geomorphology: Quaternary of Scotland
Geomorphology: Fluvial geomorphology of Scotland

Biological: Woodlands: Upland birch woodland
Invertebrates: Cranefly (*Lipsothrix ecucullata*)

DESCRIPTION

Corrieshalloch Gorge Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies in Wester Ross, 19km southeast of Ullapool. This nationally important site is a classic example of a gorge formed by glacial meltwater rivers. The gorge is flanked by nationally important birch woodland which provides suitable habitat for the nationally rare cranefly *Lipsothrix ecucullata*.

Quaternary of Scotland

Corrieshalloch Gorge SSSI is one of the most spectacular gorges of its type in Britain and affords striking evidence of how glacial meltwaters can erode deep gorges. The gorge was formed during the Quaternary Ice Age as vast quantities of meltwater were released when the glaciers and ice sheets which existed in northern Scotland between 2.6 million and 11,500 years ago melted. The erosive power of these glacial meltwater torrents is well illustrated at Corrieshalloch, where they carved a slot gorge 1.6km in length and up to 60m in depth into the Moine bedrock.

Fluvial (river) geomorphology of Scotland

This site is a particularly good example of how weaknesses in the bedrock influence the way rivers cause erosion. Preferential erosion along lines of weakness in the bedrock has worked to form the profile of the gorge, with an impressive series of stepped waterfalls and pools, and the spectacular 45m high Falls of Measach at the head of the gorge. The Abhainn Droma, which flows through the gorge today, provides a striking example of a steep, highly confined and sediment-starved bedrock channel, immediately upstream of a sea loch in a glacial trough.

Upland birch woodland

The woodland on the steep sides of the gorge contains a broad range of native tree species such as birch *Betula pubescens*, oak *Quercus robur*, holly *Ilex aquifolium* and aspen *Populus tremula*. The steepness of the gorge and its edge has

discouraged grazing animals and as a consequence the woodland has a well-developed understorey with a rich and varied flora. Grasses typical of deep shade are common, with an abundance of wood millet *Milium effusum* and wood fescue *Festuca altissima*. Ferns and mosses are abundant and notable species include Wilson's filmy fern *Hymenophyllum wilsonii*.

Cranefly (*Lipsothrix ecucullata*)

The woodland provides habitat for the nationally rare crane fly species *Lipsothrix ecucullata*. Adult *Lipsothrix ecucullata* are found in wet areas in damp, deciduous woodlands, whilst the larvae are found in well decayed wood, lying partially immersed in water.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1949 Act: 1974

Re-notified under the 1981 Act: 5 March 1984

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 26 March 2009

REMARKS

Measured area of site corrected (from 5.3 ha).