

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7, as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Note for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.
2. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat. Compilers are strongly urged to provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of maps.

1. Name and address of the compiler of this form:**Joint Nature Conservation Committee**

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

Designated: 14 July 1988, updated 12 May 2005

3. Country:

UK (Scotland)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

Gruinart Flats, Islay

5. Map of site included:Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps.**a) hard copy** (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes* ✓ -or- *no***b) digital (electronic) format** (optional): Yes

6. Geographical coordinates (latitude/longitude):

55 50 42 N

06 19 33 W

7. General location:

Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s), and the location of the nearest large town.

Nearest town/city: Bowmore

North-west coast of the Inner Hebridean island of Islay off the west coast of Scotland.

Administrative region: Argyll and Bute

8. Elevation (average and/or max. & min.) (metres): **9. Area** (hectares): 3260.69

Min. -1

Max. 37

Mean 11

10. Overview:

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

Estuarine sand flats, saltmarsh and ombrogenous bog habitats are the main wetland habitat types, supporting roosting, breeding and feeding waterfowl populations.

11. Ramsar Criteria:

Circle or underline each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11).

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Secretariat comment: The RIS provides information requiring the application of Criterion 4. This needs to be included in the next update.

12. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 11. above:

Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

Ramsar criterion 6 – species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.

Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):

Species with peak counts in winter:

Greenland white-fronted goose, *Anser albifrons flavirostris*,
Greenland (br) 3000 individuals, representing an average of 10% of the flyway population (5 year peak means 91/2-95/6 (estimated))

Barnacle goose, *Branta leucopsis*,
Greenland (br) Ireland, UK 20000 individuals, representing an average of 36.9% of the population (5 year peak mean - 91/2-95/6)

Contemporary data and information on waterbird trends at this site and their regional (sub-national) and national contexts can be found in the Wetland Bird Survey report, which is updated annually. See www.bto.org/survey/webs/webs-alerts-index.htm.

13. Biogeography (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):

Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

a) biogeographic region:

Atlantic

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):

Council Directive 92/43/EEC

14. Physical features of the site:

Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

Soil & geology	acidic, neutral, shingle, sand, alluvium, peat, nutrient-rich, metamorphic, sandstone
Geomorphology and landscape	lowland, island, coastal, slope, intertidal sediments (including sandflat/mudflat), open coast (including bay), estuary, islands
Nutrient status	no information
pH	strongly acidic

Salinity	fresh, saline / euhaline
Soil	mainly mineral
Water permanence	usually permanent
Summary of main climatic features	Annual averages (Dunstaffnage, 1971–2000) (www.metoffice.com/climate/uk/averages/19712000/sites/dunstaffnage.html) Max. daily temperature: 12.1° C Min. daily temperature: 6.1° C Days of air frost: 29.4 Rainfall: 1660.9 mm Hrs. of sunshine: 1224.0

General description of the Physical Features:

Gruinart Flats comprises a diverse array of coastal habitats typical of western Scotland. The main features are a sheltered estuarine and intertidal sea loch (holding sand- and mud-flats as well as an extensive saltmarsh and sand dunes) surrounded by pastoral farmland and backed by semi-natural upland habitats (including ombrogenous peatlands).

15. Physical features of the catchment area:

Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, general land use, and climate (including climate type).

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16. Hydrological values:

Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

Shoreline stabilisation and dissipation of erosive forces, Recharge and discharge of groundwater

17. Wetland types

Inland wetland, Marine/coastal wetland

Code	Name	% Area
E	Sand / shingle shores (including dune systems)	9.1
G	Tidal flats	36.3
H	Salt marshes	1.7
O	Freshwater lakes: permanent	2.1
U	Peatlands (including peat bogs swamps, fens)	18.8
4	Seasonally flooded agricultural land	3.1
Other	Other	28.9

18. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site.

This site has extensive sand-flats, coastal grasslands and dune grasslands. Saltmarsh, semi-improved and improved neutral grasslands (some seasonally flooded). Extensive wet and dry heaths with acid and marshy grasslands grading into ombrogenous bog and swamp with some semi-natural scrub. Small areas of ancient semi-natural woodland and recent secondary planted woods.

19. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g. which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

None reported

20. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g. which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

Birds**Species currently occurring at levels of national importance:****Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:**

Ruff, <i>Philomachus pugnax</i> , Europe/W Africa	23 individuals, representing an average of 3.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
Light-bellied brent goose, <i>Branta bernicla hrota</i> , East Canada/Ireland	71 individuals, representing an average of 0.3% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Species Information

None reported

21. Social and cultural values:

e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc. Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values.

Aesthetic
 Archaeological/historical site
 Environmental education/ interpretation
 Fisheries production
 Livestock grazing
 Non-consumptive recreation
 Religious
 Sport fishing
 Sport hunting

22. Land tenure/ownership:

Ownership category	On-site	Off-site
Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	+	+
National/Crown Estate	+	
Private	+	+

23. Current land (including water) use:

Activity	On-site	Off-site
Nature conservation	+	+
Recreation	+	+
Current scientific research	+	
Collection of non-timber natural products: subsistence	+	
Fishing: recreational/sport	+	
Marine/saltwater aquaculture	+	
Gathering of shellfish	+	
Permanent arable agriculture	+	

Rough or shifting grazing	+	
Permanent pastoral agriculture	+	
Hay meadows	+	
Hunting: recreational/sport	+	
Sewage treatment/disposal	+	
Domestic water supply	+	

24. Factors adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:

Explanation of reporting category:

1. Those factors that are still operating, but it is unclear if they are under control, as there is a lag in showing the management or regulatory regime to be successful.
2. Those factors that are not currently being managed, or where the regulatory regime appears to have been ineffective so far.

NA = Not Applicable because no factors have been reported.

Adverse Factor Category	Reporting Category	Description of the problem (Newly reported Factors only)	On-Site	Off-Site	Major Impact?
No factors reported	NA				

For category 2 factors only.

What measures have been taken / are planned / regulatory processes invoked, to mitigate the effect of these factors?

Is the site subject to adverse ecological change? NO

25. Conservation measures taken:

List national category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site; management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it is being implemented.

Conservation measure	On-site	Off-site
Site/ Area of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI/ASSI)	+	
Special Protection Area (SPA)	+	
Land owned by a non-governmental organisation for nature conservation	+	+
Management agreement	+	+
Site management statement/plan implemented	+	

26. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

No information available

27. Current scientific research and facilities:

e.g. details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

Fauna.

Numbers of migratory and wintering wildfowl and waders are monitored annually as part of the national Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) organised by the British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Regular wildfowl counts undertaken by RSPB and SNH.

Chough Survey to be undertaken 1998.

Research on lapwing productivity is ongoing by RSPB.

Habitat.

Sand Dune Survey of GB included two areas of this site.

Flora.

RSPB NVC survey of Loch Gruinart Reserve.

Vegetation monitoring under several MA's.

28. Current conservation education:

e.g. visitor centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

The site is used as a resource by local schools, assisted with information and guidance from SNH and RSPB who run guided walks all year for the general public.

29. Current recreation and tourism:

State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

Activities, Facilities provided and Seasonality.

Recreation is very low-key and spread over the whole year. Birdwatching groups visit regularly.

Otherwise, casual tourism.

30. Jurisdiction:

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept. of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

Scottish Executive, Environment and Rural Affairs Department

31. Management authority:

Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

Scottish Natural Heritage, 2 Anderson Place, Edinburgh, EH6 5NP

32. Bibliographical references:

Scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 13 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

Site-relevant references

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