

37. Eilean Na Muice Duibhe

Geographical Coordinates 55°42'N 6°15'W

Area 574ha

Location On the west coast of the island of Islay, some 55km north-west of the town of Campbeltown, in Strathclyde region, south-west Scotland.

Date of Ramsar Designation 14 July 1988.

Other International Designations Special Protection Area under EC Directive 79/409.

National Designations Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Principal Features An area of low-level blanket mire (also known as Duich Moss), bounded by the Duich River, the River Laggan and two roads, with scattered peaty pools and lochans. The mire vegetation is highly oceanic in character, with hummocks of the mosses *Sphagnum imbricatum* and *S. fuscum* and stands of *Rhynchospora alba*. Breeding birds include *Gavia stellata*, *Circus cyaneus*, *Calidris alpina* and *Tringa totanus*. The area forms a night-time roosting and feeding area for internationally important numbers of wintering *Anser albifrons flavirostris* and *Branta leucopsis* of the Greenland breeding population. (1a,2a,3b,3c)

Conservation Issues The site was recently threatened by a proposal for the large-scale, commercial extraction of peat. This threat has been removed but the site remains vulnerable to the effects of drainage of surrounding areas and invasion by the alien shrub *Rhododendron ponticum*. In cooperation with land owners/occupiers, the Commission of the European Communities, and Islay's whisky industry, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is engaged in a number of research and management activities. These include hydrological monitoring to assess the effect of commercial peat cutting, the installation of dams to control water levels, a programme of *Rhododendron ponticum* control and an education/ interpretation project to increase public information of the site's conservation value. See also account for site number 36 (Gruinart Flats).