

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 (1990), as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the 8th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2002) and Resolutions IX.1 Annex B, IX.6, IX.21 and IX. 22 of the 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties (2005).

Notes 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. Further information and guidance in support of Ramsar site designations are provided in the *Strategic Framework for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 7, 2nd edition, as amended by COP9 Resolution IX.1 Annex B). A 3rd edition of the Handbook, incorporating these amendments, is in preparation and will be available in 2006.
3. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat. Compilers should provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of all maps.

1. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Monkstone House

City Road

Peterborough

Cambridgeshire PE1 1JY

UK

Telephone/Fax: +44 (0)1733 – 562 626 / +44 (0)1733 – 555 948

Email: RIS@JNCC.gov.uk

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

DD MM YY

--	--	--

Designation date

--	--	--	--	--	--

Site Reference Number

2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

Designated: 14 July 1988

3. Country:

UK (Scotland)

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

Gruinart Flats, Islay

5. Designation of new Ramsar site or update of existing site:

This RIS is for: Updated information on an existing Ramsar site

6. For RIS updates only, changes to the site since its designation or earlier update:

a) Site boundary and area:

** Important note: If the boundary and/or area of the designated site is being restricted/reduced, the Contracting Party should have followed the procedures established by the Conference of the Parties in the Annex to COP9 Resolution IX.6 and provided a report in line with paragraph 28 of that Annex, prior to the submission of an updated RIS.

b) Describe briefly any major changes to the ecological character of the Ramsar site, including in the application of the Criteria, since the previous RIS for the site:

occurring at levels of international importance.

Qualifying Species/populations (as identified at designation):

Species with peak counts in spring/autumn:

Light-bellied brent goose, *Branta bernicla hrota*, 71 individuals, representing an average of 0.3% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
East Canada/Ireland

Species with peak counts in winter:

Greenland white-fronted goose, *Anser albifrons flavirostris*, Greenland 3000 individuals, representing an average of 11.1% of the population (5 year peak means 91/2-95/6 (estimated))

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

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.

15. 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

16. 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).

17. 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).

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).

18. 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

19. Wetland types:

Inland wetland, Marine/coastal wetland

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

20. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site, and the ecosystem services of the site and the benefits derived from them.

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.

Ecosystem services

21. 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

22. 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 , *Philomachus pugnax*, Europe/W Africa 23 individuals, representing an average of 3.2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Species Information

None reported

23. Social and cultural values:

Describe if the site has any general social and/or 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

b) Is the site considered of international importance for holding, in addition to relevant ecological values, examples of significant cultural values, whether material or non-material, linked to its origin, conservation and/or ecological functioning? No

If Yes, describe this importance under one or more of the following categories:

- i) sites which provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland:
- ii) sites which have exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland:
- iii) sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples:
- iv) sites where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland:

24. Land tenure/ownership:

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

25. 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	+	

26. Factors (past, present or potential) 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

27. 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	+	

b) Describe any other current management practices:

The management of Ramsar sites in the UK is determined by either a formal management plan or through other management planning processes, and is overseen by the relevant statutory conservation agency. Details of the precise management practises are given in these documents.

28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

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

No information available

29. 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.

30. Current communications, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities related to or benefiting the site:

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.

31. 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.

32. 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

33. 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

34. Bibliographical references:

Scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 15 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

Site-relevant references

- Barne, JH, Robson, CF, Kaznowska, SS, Doody, JP, Davidson, NC & Buck, AL (eds.) (1997) *Coasts and seas of the United Kingdom. Region 14 South-west Scotland: Ballantrae to Mull*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough. (Coastal Directories Series.)
- Bignal, E, Curtis, D & Matthews J (1988) Islay: Land types, bird habitats and nature conservation. Part 1. Land types and birds on Islay. *NCC CSD Report*, No. **809**
- Boyd, JM & Bowes, DR (eds.) (1983) *The natural environment of the Inner Hebrides. Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Series B: Biological Sciences*, **83**
- Boyd, JM & Boyd, IL (1990) *The Hebrides. A natural history*. Collins, London (New Naturalist No. 76)
- Buck, AL (ed.) (1993) *An inventory of UK estuaries. Volume 3. North-west Britain*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough
- Burd, F (1989) *The saltmarsh survey of Great Britain. An inventory of British saltmarshes*. Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough (Research & Survey in Nature Conservation, No. 17)
- Connor, DW & Little, M (1998) Chapter 13. West Scotland (MNCR Sector 13). In: *Benthic marine ecosystems of Great Britain and the north-east Atlantic*, ed. by K. Hiscock, 355-370. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough. (Coasts and Seas of the United Kingdom. MNCR series)
- Cranswick, PA, Waters, RJ, Musgrove, AJ & Pollitt, MS (1997) *The Wetland Bird Survey 1995–96: wildfowl and wader counts*. British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds & Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Slimbridge
- Dargie, TCD (1993) *Sand dune vegetation survey of Great Britain: a national inventory. Part II: Scotland*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough
- Dargie, TCD (2000) Sand dune vegetation survey of Scotland: national report. *Scottish Natural Heritage, Commissioned Report*, No. F97AA401. www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/strategy/commreports/F97AA401.pdf
- Dipper, FA, Howson, CM & Steele, D (in prep.) *Marine Nature Conservation Review Sector 13. Sealochs in west Scotland: area summaries*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough (Coasts and seas of the United Kingdom. MNCR series)
- Easterbee, N, Stroud, DA, Bignal, EM & Dick, TD (1987) The arrival of Greenland barnacle geese, *Branta leucopsis*, at Loch Gruinart, Islay. *Scottish Birds*, **14**, 175-179
- Hampson, P, Beaumont, D & Peacock, M (1996) Integrating farming and wildlife conservation at the RSPB Loch Gruinart Nature Reserve. *RSPB Conservation Review*, **10**, 59-68
- May, VJ & Hansom, JD (eds.) (2003) *Coastal geomorphology of Great Britain*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough (Geological Conservation Review Series, No. 28)
- Musgrove, AJ, Pollitt, MS, Hall, C, Hearn, RD, Holloway, SJ, Marshall, PE, Robinson, JA & Cranswick, PA (2001) *The Wetland Bird Survey 1999–2000: wildfowl and wader counts*. British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds & Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Slimbridge. www.wwt.org.uk/publications/default.asp?PubID=14
- Ramsay, DL & Brampton, AH (2000) Coastal cells in Scotland: Cell 5 – Cape Wrath to the Mull of Kintyre. *Scottish Natural Heritage Research Survey and Monitoring Report*, No. **147**
- Ratcliffe, DA (ed.) (1977) *A Nature Conservation Review. The selection of biological sites of national importance to nature conservation in Britain*. Cambridge University Press (for the Natural Environment Research Council and the Nature Conservancy Council), Cambridge (2 vols.)
- Stroud, DA, Chambers, D, Cook, S, Buxton, N, Fraser, B, Clement, P, Lewis, P, McLean, I, Baker, H & Whitehead, S (eds.) (2001) *The UK SPA network: its scope and content*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough (3 vols.) www.jncc.gov.uk/UKSPA/default.htm
- Weighell, AJ, Donnelly, AP & Calder, K (eds.) (2000) *Directory of the Celtic coasts and seas*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough

Please return to: **Ramsar Secretariat, Rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland**
 Telephone: +41 22 999 0170 • Fax: +41 22 999 0169 • email: ramsar@ramsar.org