

**CITATION FOR SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA (SPA)**

**EAST CAITHNESS CLIFFS  
(UK9001182)**

**INCLUDING MARINE EXTENSION**

**Site Description:**

East Caithness Cliffs Special Protection Area is of special nature conservation and scientific importance within Britain and the European Community for supporting very large populations of breeding seabirds. It includes most of the sea-cliff areas between Wick and Helmsdale on the north-east coast of the Scottish mainland.

The boundary of the SPA overlaps either partly or wholly with the following Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): Castle of Old Wick to Craig Hammel SSSI, Craig Hammel to Sgaps Geo SSSI, Dunbeath to Sgaps Geo SSSI, Burn of Latheronwheel SSSI, Berriedale Cliffs SSSI, Ousdale Burn SSSI and Helmsdale Coast SSSI. The seaward extension extends approximately 2km into the marine environment to include the seabed, water column and surface.

**Qualifying Interest** (N.B. All figures relate to numbers at the time of classification except where amended by the 2001 SPA Review):

East Caithness Cliffs SPA qualifies under **Article 4.1** by regularly supporting populations of European importance of the **Annex 1** species **peregrine** *Falco peregrinus* (6 pairs, 0.5% of the GB population).

East Caithness Cliffs SPA further qualifies under **Article 4.2** by regularly supporting populations of European importance of the **migratory** species: **common guillemot** *Uria aalge* (106,700 individuals, 3.1% of north Atlantic biogeographic population); **razorbill** *Alca torda* (15,800 individuals, 1.8% of total *A. t. islandica* biogeographic population), **herring gull** *Larus argentatus* (9,400 pairs, 1.0% of NW European biogeographic population), **black-legged kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* (32,500 pairs, 1.0% of north Atlantic biogeographic population), and **European shag** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* (2,300 pairs, 1.8% of the north Europe biogeographic population).

East Caithness Cliffs SPA also qualifies under **Article 4.2** by regularly supporting **in excess of 20,000 individual seabirds**. It regularly supports 300,000 individual seabirds including nationally important populations of the following species: **great black-backed gull** *Larus marinus* (800 pairs, 4% of the GB population), **cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* (230 pairs, 3% of the GB population), **Northern fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis* (15,000 pairs, 3% of the GB population), **razorbill** (15,800 individuals, 11% of the GB population), **common guillemot** (106,700 individuals, 10% of the GB population), **black-legged kittiwake** (32,500 pairs, 7% of the GB population), **herring gull** (9,400 pairs, 6% of the GB population), **European shag** (2,300 pairs, 6% of the GB population) and **Atlantic puffin** (1750 pairs, over 10% of the minimum qualifying assemblage of 20,000 individuals.)

Area: 11,690.92 ha  
National Grid References: ND056172 to ND371489  
OS Sheet 1:50,000 – 12 & 17

Classified on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1996, with marine extension classified on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2009

**Scottish Natural Heritage  
September 2009**