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Scotland's First Settlers coastal survey. Preliminary site impact report

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INTRO

The total number of known rockshelters, caves, lithic scatters and dated Mesolithic sites in the SFS study region, (land within and surrounding the Inner Sound and Sound of Raasay) currently stands at 116. Of these, 11 sites had been recorded prior to the establishment of the SFS project. The remaining 105 sites have been newly recorded by SFS in 1999 and 2000.

GEN CONDITION

94 sites were examined during the coastal survey using Historic Scotland's coastal survey threat categories (Ashmore 1994). Table 1 shows the quantities of sites found and their overall condition.

Condition of sites	Quantities of sites
Accreting and eroding	12
Definitely eroding	34
Eroding or stable	8
Stable	40
Total	94

Table 1

TYPES OF THREAT

Assessment of types of erosion revealed that animals are the main cause of erosion, although many sites are being affected by more than one type of erosion. Table 2 identifies all the erosions types at the 94 sites, it thus adds up to more than 94.

Types of erosion	Number of sites affected
Abrasion	1
Animal	45
Human	16
Cliff/slope failure	14
Deflation	25
Recent roof collapse	2
Waves	7
Water (rain/streams)	4
Wind	4

Table 2

SITE VULNERABILITY

Analysis BY SITE type revealed a notable difference in their current state OF erosion. Lithic scatters and open middens are almost always eroding, while almost half of caves and rockshelters are currently in a stable state.

	Stable	Accreting & eroding	Definitely eroding	Eroding or stable
Rockshelters & Caves	36	10	13	5
Open middens	1	0	7	0
Lithic scatters	0	1	14	2

Table 3

(I THINK YOU NEED TO EXPLAIN THE ERODING OR STABLE CATEGORY HERE)

The types of erosion BY site type ARE shown in table 4.

	Rockshelters/caves	Open middens	Lithic scatters
Wave attack	3	1	1
Animal	4	5	13
Cliff/slope failure	2		8
Human	1	3	1
Deflation	1		12
Water (rain etc)			1
Abrasion		1	

Table 4

CONCLUSIONS

1. This preliminary report has shown that Open midden sites and particularly lithic scatters are PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE to destructive and frequently multiple types of erosion. With respect to THE MANAGEMENT OF SITES WITHIN THE SFS STUDY AREA, any DETAILED EXAMINATION should be concentrated on open sites, particularly lithic scatters (*I DOUBT THE LITHIC SCATTERS ARE ACTUALLY MORE VULNERABLE THAN AN OPEN MIDDEN???*), AND INCLUDE both DETAILED survey and excavation.
2. THE OPEN SITES OF THE INNER SOUND REPRESENT A FRAGILE RESOURCE. MANY APPEAR TO BE PREHISTORIC AND SFS SURVEY HAS SHOWN THAT THEY ARE PRESENT IN GREATER THAN EXPECTED NUMBERS. If THEY are not found and examined in the relatively near future, they WILL disappear. and a major prehistoric site type will disappear from the archaeological record.
3. THIS VULNERABILITY SUGGESTS THAT THROUGH TIME OPEN sites have always been disappearing at a much faster rate than those SITES WHICH HAVE THE PROTECTION OF protected by caves and rockshelters. With

regard to site type and distribution analyses, the rapid rate of disappearance of these open sites and the almost universally natural threats to which they are subjected suggests that. This IS AN IMPORTANT CONSTRAINT FOR THE USE OF DISTRIBUTION MAPS IN THE AREA. IT HAS CERTAINLY AFFECTED THE PREHISTORIC RECORD OF THE INNER SOUND AND MAY WELL BE A FACTOR THAT SHOULD BE STUDIED FOR THE REST OF SCOTLAND. should be taken into consideration when prehistoric site distribution patterns are examined.

TABLES NEED CAPTIONS

XXX = DELETE

UPPERCASE = MY SUGGESTED ALTERATION

XXX (itals) - MY COMMENT - I LIKE THE CONCS, BUT I THINK IT WILL HAVE MORE IMPACT IF YOU PUT THE WHOLE THING INTO CIVIL SERVICE PARAGRAPHS.... I STARTED THIS.