

1. Country: Ireland
2. Date: 19 December 1995
3. Ref: 7IE 022
4. Name of wetland: Ballycotton, Ballynamona and Shanagarry

This is a composite coastal site stretching northwards from Ballycotton towards Garryvoe. Much of the area was a tidal inlet until 1930 when it was cut off from the sea by the development of a shingle storm beach. This created a series of 3 wetlands, only the middle of which remained tidal. Recently, however, the shingle bar at the southern end of the site was breached destroying Ballycotton Lake and rendering this inlet tidal also.

The main habitats of interest are the wetlands, although the recent NHA survey revealed that much of the area described in the 1986 An Foras Forbartha report has been substantially altered by drainage, land reclamation and a breach in the shingle bar. However, it is likely that elements of the former habitats still exist. These were dominated by Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, with some marshes below Garryvoe containing interesting plant species such as Greater Pond-Sedge *Carex riparia*, Water Dock *Rumex hydrolapatum* and Pink Water-Spedwell *Veronica cateriata*.

The shingle beach still exists and in the 1986 report it was described thus: The shingle beach is mobile and influenced by storms. This creates open conditions which favour several unusual species, including two local species Grass-leaved Orache *Atriplex littoralis* and Black Mustard *Brassica nigra*. Sea Radish *Raphanus raphanistrum* subsp. *maritimum* is very noticeable in this community and there is some sand couch *Elymus farctus* and Lyme-grass *Leymus arenarius*.

The shingle beach also supports Sea-Kale *Crambe maritima*, a scarce species listed in the Irish Red Data Book.

Despite the damage to the habitats, within this site, it remains a very diverse site which is of considerable scientific interest, most notably for its bird life. It contains nationally important numbers of eight species of waterfowl namely; Bewick's Swan (100), Gadwall (70), Shoveler (93) and Turnstone (112) - all counts are average peaks, 1984/85 - 1986/87. A further thirteen species occur in regionally or locally important numbers. The site is also notable for its records of rare migrants. Reed warblers, rare in Ireland, breeding the phragmite beds.

Land use within this site is varied, but grazing is dominant. The greatest damage has been caused by land reclamation and drainage. However, the most severe impact was caused by the breaching of the shingle bar 4-5 years ago. This led to the loss of a brackish lake (Ballycotton Lake) and the almost total disappearance of the many wildfowl, especially all three swan species, that used it. The site is a Wildfowl refuge, while the open shore part is a Special Protection Area. (E.U. Birds Directive).

This site contains some geological interest, with the eroding cliffy shoreline at Garryvoe revealing two glacial tills, one being produced by the local mountain glacier and the other by the Irish Sea ice-sheet.

Apart from this geological interest, the site is of value because it supports nationally important

numbers of eight species of waterfowl and regionally or locally important numbers of thirteen others. The breeding Reed warblers are also of interest. Its proximity to Cork is also an asset, since it allows easy access to a large number of bird-watchers, whose efforts have increased the number of records of rare vagrants. The presence of Sea-kale (*Crambe maritima*), a scarce Red Data Book species, adds to the interest of the area.