

1. Country: Ireland
2. Date:
3. Ref: 7IE023
4. Name of wetland: Ballymacoda (Clonpriest and Pillmore)

This coastal site stretches north-east from Ballymacoda to within 6km of Youghal, and is situated between two other NHA's (Ballycotton, Ballynamore and Shanagarry and Ballyverghan Marsh).

The Womangh River forms an estuary comprised of sand and mud flats, flanked by reclaimed marshy fields and saltmarsh. The area is sheltered by a stabilised shingle bar and extensive sandy beach.

In places, the inter-tidal flats are colonised by algae mats (*Enteromorpha* sp.) with brown seaweeds (*Fucus* sp.) occurring on the rocky shores of the shingle spits. Common Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*) has spread within the estuary since the late 1970's and may pose a threat to mudflat feeders.

The main interest of the area lies in its waterfowl, with flocks of over 20,000 regularly present during winter with a total of 106 wetland species recorded (during 202 counts, 1971-1988; peat 31,991, 1984).

Fourteen species occur in nationally important numbers, namely: Shelduck (174), Wigeon (1,205), Teal (1,295), Golden Plover (6,317), Grey Plover (336), Sanderling (54), Dunlin (2,803), Black-tailed Godwit (399), Bar-tailed Godwit (636), Curlew (1,153), Redshank (280) and Turnstone (125) - all counts average peaks, 1984/85 - 1986/87 - with Ringed Plover and Lapwing also occurring in nationally important numbers if a longer time scale is used (1971-1988).

Furthermore, two of these species, Golden Plover and Black-tailed Godwits, reached internationally important levels during 9 and 8 years respectively (1971 - 1988). Several additional species occur in regionally or locally important numbers, namely; Mute Swan, Knot, Cormorant, Mallard, Shoveler, Oystercatcher and Greenshank.

Much of the land adjacent to the estuary has been reclaimed and is subject to intensive agricultural use, with cattle grazing and silage being the most common. However, many of these fields remain marshy and are important feeding areas for Ducks, Golden Plover and Lapwing. The most serious threat to the site is water pollution, primarily from slurry spreading.

This site is of interest because it supports a higher number of waders than any other Cork estuary of its size. It also contains nationally to internationally important numbers of two species, with nationally important numbers of twelve further species of waterfowl.

Sources:

- Corine Biotopes Data Entry Form (updated 1989)
- Sheppard, Ralph (1993) "Ireland's Wetland Wealth" Irish Wildbird Conservancy

- Smiddy, Pat (1992) "The Waterfowl of Ballymacoda, Co. Cork". Irish Birds 4:525-548
- Wetland Data Sheet Europe (1987)
- National ASI Survey - Site Card: Rangers (1993)