

71E030

Galway Bay Complex

Date: 13.2.1995

Inner Galway Bay is the shallow more sheltered eastern part of a large sea bay which is partially sheltered by the Aran Islands. The Burren Karstic limestone fringes the southern side and there are numerous shallow and intertidal inlets on the Eastern and Southern sides. A number of small low islands composed of glacial deposits are located along the Eastern side. The area includes some of the most interesting and well documented areas for marine life along the West Coast of Ireland.

A good range of marine, coastal and terrestrial habitats occur within the site adding greatly to the scientific and wildlife value of the area. Approximately 65% of the Irish Marine algal flora is known to occur between New Quay and Martello Tower. The area around Finavarra has the richest seaweed flora on the Irish Coast (500+ species) and is reckoned to be among the top ten sites in the world.

The site is of special interest for waterfowl with internationally important numbers of brent geese (480-537) and ringed plover (up to 657). Fourteen species of waterfowl occur in nationally important numbers c. 35spp. of waterfowl occur regularly and a further c. 20 infrequently.

There is a large cormorant colony on Teer Island (200+ pairs - nationally important).

There are a number of locations throughout the bay where aquaculture activities have been in progress for a number of years.