



# Ramsar Sites Information Service

## Annotated List of Wetlands of International Importance

# Ireland

45 Ramsar Site(s) covering 67,240 ha

### Baldoyle Bay

Site number: 413 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Dublin

Area: 203 ha | Coordinates: 53°24'23"N 06°07'40"W | Designation dates: 25-10-1988

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

This estuarine system fed by two small rivers, the Mayne and the Sluice, is separated from the sea by a major sand dune peninsula. It is part of the Dublin Bay wetlands complex. In the inner estuary there are extensive beds of common cord-grass, while seawards vast mudflats are exposed at low tide. These characteristic habitats provide good quality feeding areas and roost sites for a wide range of birds such as the regionally threatened pale-bellied brent goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*), which winters there, and the nationally threatened Eurasian oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*). The area surrounding Baldoyle Bay is densely populated, and most of the dunes sheltering the Site are now used as a golf course. The main threats to the Site include the disturbance to wildfowl by the high number of visitors, and the dumping of spoil onto the foreshore. Besides recreation and research, the Site is important for erosion protection and flood control.

### Ballyallia Lough

Site number: 845 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Clare

Area: 300 ha | Coordinates: 52°52'36"N 08°59'05"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site is a naturally eutrophic small shallow lake on the River Fergus. The lake with its fringing woodland, marsh and swamp and temporary flooded grassland provides important water storage and nutrient cycling functions. The capacity of the lake and associated wetland habitats to retain water during high rainfall is important for downstream flood mitigation. A few emergent plants are found, such as common club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*) and common reed (*Phragmites australis*). The Site supports important populations of wintering waterbirds such as shoveler, wigeon, coot, mallard and gadwall. The lake is used for a range of recreational activities. Small threats are presented by ingress of urban waste water.

## Ballycotton Bay

Site number: 830 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: South West (NUTS 3)  
Area: 92 ha | Coordinates: 51°50'33"N 08°00'58"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Ballycotton Bay comprises a stretch of coastline with shallow marine areas and two sheltered inlets which receive water from several small rivers. The main habitats are intertidal mudflats with fringing saltwater and freshwater marshes. These provide important roosting sites and foraging resources for waterbirds, notably wintering birds such as the common loon (*Gavia immer*) and the bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*). The Site is a well-known location for waders, especially during their autumn passage. The estuarine and coastal habitats are important for coastal erosion control and storm protection, and provide a natural filtration service which is important for coastal water quality. Human activities include livestock grazing. Monitoring is implemented, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service Conservation Rangers regularly inspect the Site.

## Ballymacoda

Site number: 831 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: South West (NUTS 3)  
Area: 375 ha | Coordinates: 51°54'20"N 07°53'56"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

This estuary of intertidal sand and mud flats is sheltered by a stabilized shingle bar and an extensive sandy beach flanked by reclaimed marshy fields and saltmarshes. The abundance of macroinvertebrates in the intertidal flats provides an important feeding resource for waterbirds including Ireland's national bird, the northern lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*). Internationally important numbers of waterbirds winter at the Site, including more than one percent of the regional population of the black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*). The estuary is important for storm protection and provides natural filtration services which are important for coastal water quality. The spread of the invasive common cordgrass (*Spartina anglica*) has negatively impacted the ecological character of the mudflats and saltmarshes.

## Bannow Bay

Site number: 840 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: South East (NUTS 3)  
Area: 958 ha | Coordinates: 52°13'52"N 06°47'50"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996  
[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site is a large and very sheltered estuarine system with a narrow outlet to the sea and extensive mud and sand flats, saltmarshes and sand dunes. It contains natural examples of marine habitats and natural wetland types which are representative of the Atlantic biogeographic region. The saltmarshes feature exceptional species diversity. The Site's Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous (salt-tolerant) scrub (of the class *Sarcocornetea fruticosi*) is the rarest in Ireland of the saltmarsh habitats in Annex I of the European Union's Habitats Directive. Bannow Bay supports a notable diversity of wintering waterbirds, for which it is one of the most important Sites in the south-east of the country. More than 1% of the global population of light-bellied brent goose, and notable populations of shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*), little egret (*Egretta garzetta*), golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), black-tailed godwit, bar-tailed godwit and curlew are found. Bannow Bay is used for recreational, scientific and educational purposes. The invasive common cordgrass (*Spartina anglica*) is a threat to the intertidal mudflats and *Salicornia* flats, and the removal of sediment and beach material, erosion, discharges and off-road driving pose significant threats to the ecological character of the Site.

## Blacksod Bay and Broadhaven

Site number: 844 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Mayo

Area: 683 ha | Coordinates: 54°03'N 10°00'W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Blacksod Bay and Broadhaven. 11/06/96; Mayo; 683 ha; 54°03'N 010°00'W. A composite of diverse marine and coastal habitats that includes vast dune systems and extensive areas of dune grassland with saltmarshes occurring in sheltered bays and inlets. The grasslands are of considerable botanical importance. The site also includes several brackish lakes important to various species of breeding waders, large numbers of wintering waterbirds of various species, and internationally important numbers of Brent geese. Ramsar site no. 844. Most recent RIS information: 1995.

## Blackwater Estuary

Site number: 836 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Waterford

Area: 468 ha | Coordinates: 51°58'03"N 07°50'25"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

This Site comprises a section of the Blackwater River's main channel from Youghal New Bridge to the Ferry Point peninsula, close to where the River enters the sea. At low tide, intertidal sand and mud flats are exposed. These rare habitats support eel grass, worms and molluscs, all of which are important feeding resources for wintering waterbirds including endangered species such as the northern lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) and the great northern loon (*Gavia immer*). The Estuary is a passage for a range of nationally endangered migratory fish species such as the Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) and the European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*). A stable population of otters (*Lutra lutra*) can also be found. The Site is ideal for recreation, nature observation, scientific species monitoring and research. It is also important for coastal flood protection, shoreline stabilisation, and sediment and nutrient retention. One of the biggest threats is pollution through inflow of insufficiently treated sewage.

## Castlemaine Harbour

Site number: 470 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: South West (NUTS 3)

Area: 2,973 ha | Coordinates: 52°07'37"N 09°51'50"W | Designation dates: 30-05-1990

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Castlemaine Harbour is an estuary of two rivers at the head of Dingle Bay, protected from the sea by extensive dunes. The complex of saltmarshes, mudflats and sandbanks provides habitats for various wintering waterbirds, including internationally important numbers of the pale-bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota* that feed on the Site's eelgrass beds. The sea lamprey, river lamprey and Atlantic salmon, all protected under the EU Habitats directive, rely on the Site as important spawning habitat; it also hosts European otter. Castlemaine Harbour is used extensively for oyster, mussel and clam aquaculture and holds the largest natural mussel bed in Ireland. It is also a popular recreational area. The biggest threats are erosion, eutrophication and invasive species. Human activities such as digging for bait on the mudflats, horseback riding and dog walking disturb feeding and roosting birds. In 1999 the boundary of the Site was extended to match the Special Protection Area designated in 1994.

## Clara Bog

Site number: 415 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Midlands Region (NUTS 3)

Area: 460 ha | Coordinates: 53°19'18"N 07°37'45"W | Designation dates: 06-12-1988

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

One of the largest remaining examples in Ireland of a “midland” raised bog. The Site comprises hummocks, hollows, pools and sphagnum lawns. The bog is unique in the degree of its development and variety of “soak systems” – mineral-rich pools and small lakes that are fed from groundwater as well as rain, and support alkaline plant life. The Site also supports bog woodland species, rare butterflies, a rare click beetle and a rare moss. It is a breeding site for the merlin (*Falco columbarius*) and a habitat for the European otter (*Lutra lutra*), both species protected under the EU Habitats Directive. Clara Bog has been subject to detailed hydrological and ecological studies and is one of the best studied bogs in Europe. It is part of the EU Life raised bog restoration project “The Living Bog”. There is a visitor centre with a boardwalk and education services. Numerous other raised bogs occur in the surrounding areas, though most of these have been subjected to extensive cutting of peat and drainage, and thus are no longer considered to be active.

## Coole Lough & Garryland Wood

Site number: 473 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: West (NUTS 3)

Area: 390 ha | Coordinates: 53°05'05"N 08°51'17"W | Designation dates: 30-05-1990

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site comprises a series of “turloughs” or seasonal lakes fed by springs and a partly subterranean river. It is surrounded by mixed woodland and lies within a larger wetland complex of lake and river habitats together with species-rich grasslands and yew woodland. It is the only site in Ireland where the transition from turlough to climax woodland can be seen. Wetland wintering birds using the Site include numerous nationally threatened species such as the northern lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) and the whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*). Notable mammals include otter and pine marten. The Coole-Garryland complex is also home to one of the most important and unique assemblages of insects in the country, including several notable species of beetles and flies. The nationally rare mudwort (*Limosella aquatica*) and dropwort (*Filipendula vulgaris*) are also found, and it is the first known site in Ireland for the water-starwort *Callitriche palustris*, which was recently recorded there. The Site is important for education and recreation, and for its cultural and spiritual values. The main threats to its ecological character stem from agricultural activity.

## Cork Harbour

Site number: 837 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: South West (NUTS 3)

Area: 1,436 ha | Coordinates: 51°52'36"N 08°16'47"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Cork Harbour is part of a sheltered bay system with several river estuaries. The Site consists of four separated intertidal mud and sand flats. The tidal regime is complex, as the mudflats flood and empty rapidly rather than following a normal twelve-hour tidal cycle. These habitats regularly support 20,000 wintering waterbirds, making it one of the top five waterbird sites in Ireland. More than one percent of the regional population of black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*) can be found. The Site provides feeding and roosting habitat for the vulnerable common pochard (*Aythya ferina*) and horned grebe (*Podiceps auritus*). Pollution is one of the biggest threats: Cork Harbour is an important seaport and the headquarters of the Irish Navy; while pharmaceutical, electrochemical and petrochemical industries are established on the foreshore, making it the most heavily industrialized estuary in Ireland. Plans are underway to enhance sewage facilities in the lower part of the Harbour to improve water quality.

## Cummeen Strand

Site number: 842 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Sligo

Area: 1,491 ha | Coordinates: 54°17'19"N 08°32'36"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site is a large shallow bay, part of the wider Sligo Bay wetland complex. The intertidal, open water and coastal habitats provide important habitat for feeding, roosting and loafing waterbirds, especially during the winter months. At low tide, extensive sand and mud flats are exposed and they support a range of macro-invertebrates which are food for the wintering waterbirds, including species such as lugworm (*Arenicola marina*), ragworm (*Hediste diversicolor*), cockles (*Cerastoderma edule*), sand mason (*Lanice conchilega*), Baltic tellin (*Macoma balthica*), spire shell (*Hydrobia ulvae*) and mussels (*Mytilus edulis*). Eelgrass (*Zostera noltii* and *Zostera angustifolia*) beds also provide a valuable food stock for herbivorous wildfowl. The Site supports over 1% of the global population of light-bellied brent geese (*Branta bernicla hrota*). Other regular migrants are oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) and redshank (*Tringa totanus*). River lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) and sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*) have been recorded in the Garavogue River. Cummeen Strand is important for shellfish cultivation, tourism and recreation as well as scientific and educational research. Flights to and from the neighbouring Sligo Airport might pose a major disturbance to bird populations in the future.

## Dundalk Bay

Site number: 834 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Border Region (NUTS 3)

Area: 4,768 ha | Coordinates: 53°57'14"N 06°20'07"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

A characteristic example of a marine and coastal wetland, this open sea bay includes sand and shingle shores, extensive saltmarshes, eelgrass beds, intertidal sand and mud flats encompassing the estuaries of the rivers. The intertidal flats support a rich fauna of bivalve molluscs, marine worms and crustaceans. These are the main food source for tens of thousands of birds, predominantly waders, gulls and waterfowl: the Site regularly hosts more than 50,000 wintering waterbirds, the largest concentration on Ireland's east coast. The saltmarshes provide important habitat for waterbirds to build high-tide roosts. The Site supports more than one percent of the Northwest European/East Atlantic Flyway populations of the protected black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*). The Site is important for erosion protection and flood control and a popular area for recreation. Dredging for cockles (*Cerastoderma edule*) poses a threat, especially to benthic habitats.

## Dungarvan Harbour

Site number: 839 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: South East (NUTS 3)

Area: 1,074 ha | Coordinates: 52°04'42"N 07°36'25"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site is comprised of extensive intertidal mud and sand flats and open subtidal waters, as well as beach and dune systems and salt and freshwater marshes, which make it significant for the maintenance of regional biodiversity. The Site supports an area of eelgrass (*Zostera noltii*). Over 1% of the global populations of light-bellied brent goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*) and black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa islandica*) are found, as well as nationally important populations of numerous species including dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) and bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*). Wintering waterbirds of high conservation concern at local, European or global level include shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), barnacle goose (*Branta leucopsis*) and red knot (*Calidris canutus*). Dungarvan Harbour is the largest area of oyster cultivation in Ireland and is also important for recreation, tourism and scientific studies of its wintering birds. The local community and stakeholders from industry, business, tourism, recreation, nature and heritage have developed the Dungarvan Harbour Partnership to help protect its water quality and biodiversity and initiate climate actions. Major threats include urbanization, and aquaculture and fishing.

## Easky Bog

Site number: 471 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Sligo

Area: 607 ha | Coordinates: 54°11'19"N 08°48'46"W | Designation dates: 30-05-1990

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

This Site forms the headwaters of the Cowagh River and consists of a plateau covered with highland blanket bogs, and the steep slopes of the Ox Mountains, covered by peatland. The diversity of habitats is high, with it being one of the few places in Ireland where lowland and mountain blanket bogs are juxtaposed. These bogs are important for regulation of water quality and river flow and provide habitat for the Greenland greater white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons*) and the European golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*). The Owenduff and Lignavreehoge Rivers form a border between the Site and conifer plantations.

## Gearagh, The

Site number: 472 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Cork

Area: 307 ha | Coordinates: 51°52'N 09°01'W | Designation dates: 30-05-1990

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Gearagh, The. 30/05/90; Cork; 307 ha; 51°52'N 09°01'W. Biogenetic Reserve; Nature Reserve. The site contains the best example in Ireland of an alluvial forest ecosystem. The area is characterized by numerous wooded islands, separated by a network of stream channels. Vegetation includes rich growths of submerged aquatic plants and alluvial grasslands supporting a nationally important wintering flock of *Cygnus cygnus*. Ramsar site no. 472.

## Inner Galway Bay

Site number: 838 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Galway

Area: 11,904 ha | Coordinates: 53°12'N 09°02'20"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site is a very large, marine-dominated area situated on the west coast of Ireland. The long and diverse shoreline comprises complex mixtures of bedrock shore, shingle and sandy beaches and fringing salt marshes. Intertidal sand and mud flats and a number of small islands and rocky islets in the Bay are included. The Site supports an important colony of common seal (*Phoca vitulina*) and a breeding population of otter (*Lutra lutra*) as well as five species listed as threatened in Annex I of the European Union's Birds Directive: the black-throated diver (*Gavia arctica*), great northern diver (*Gavia immer*), golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), sandwich tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) and the common tern (*Sterna hirundo*). The Site is used for recreation and education. Several factors affect its ecological character: the reef and sediment communities are vulnerable to disturbance or compaction from tractors accessing oyster trestles; and the purple sea urchin (*Paracentrotus lividus*) populations have been shown to be vulnerable to over-harvesting. Extraction of maerl in Galway Bay, eutrophication and urban expansion as well as recreational and aquaculture activities also pose threats.

## Killala Bay/Moy Estuary

Site number: 843 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Mayo, Sligo

Area: 1,061 ha | Coordinates: 54°15'N 09°09'59"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Killala Bay/Moy Estuary. 11/06/96; Mayo, Sligo; 1,061 ha; 54°15'N 09°10'W. An estuary and intertidal bay separated from the sea by a long sandy island. The site includes a well-developed dune system, saltmarsh, sand and shingle beaches backed by sea-cliffs, and extensive sand and mudflats exposed at low tide. The dunes support a rich and diverse flora that includes several rare or threatened plants. The intertidal flats provide important feeding sites for birds. Brent geese overwinter in the bay in internationally important numbers, and regionally or locally important numbers of several species of waterbirds use the site. Human activities include beach activities, salmon fishing and livestock grazing. There is a golf course situated on the dune complex. Ramsar site no. 843.

## Knockmoyle/Sheskin

Site number: 372 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Mayo

Area: 1,198 ha | Coordinates: 54°10'46"N 09°33'11"W | Designation dates: 01-06-1987

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site is part of an extensive area of lowland blanket bog with a remarkably dense network of pools and small acidic lakes. The peat is relatively dry between the water bodies and has a well-developed cover, and the Site is rich in flora owing to an absence of burning and grazing. Boreal relict mosses, liverworts and the rare marsh saxifrage (*Saxifraga hirculus*) are characteristic. Willow ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus*) depend on the Site's heather for feeding, while the golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) benefits from the open blanket bogs with pool systems as feeding grounds. Habitat loss in the surrounding area, drainage and the hydrological changes associated with activities such as afforestation and peat extraction affect the condition of the blanket bog and its ability to retain water. The boundaries of the Site were defined using the boundaries of the Knockmoyle/Sheskin Nature Reserve which was designated in 1986 and enlarged in 1990.

## Lough Barra Bog

Site number: 373 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Donegal

Area: 176 ha | Coordinates: 54°56'47"N 08°06'43"W | Designation dates: 01-06-1987

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

This Site, adjacent to the Meenachullion Bog ([Site no.475](#)), is part of the most extensive and intact area of lowland blanket bog in north west Ireland. It includes numerous small pool complexes, heath, grassland, river and lake habitats. It is an important breeding ground for the golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) and for foraging merlin (*Falco columbarius*). The European otter (*Lutra lutra*) is also found. The bog is important for carbon storage, regulation of stream flow and water quality. The invasive *Rhododendron ponticum* is a threat to the Site, which is monitored by the National Parks and Wildlife Service Conservation Rangers.

## Lough Corrib

Site number: 846 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: West (NUTS 3)

Area: 17,728 ha | Coordinates: 53°26'49"N 09°14'45"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

This Site is one the best examples in Ireland of a large lake catchment. Its habitats include open water along with riparian freshwater marsh, fen, wet meadow and reedswamp. The most extensive beds of stoneworts (*Chara* species) in Ireland are very important in maintaining the biodiversity, structure and function of the Site and in providing a food source for waterbirds. The Site provides critical nesting and foraging habitat for common scoter (*Melanitta nigra*) and for breeding terns and gulls which nest on the lake's islands. Breeding waders which have undergone dramatic declines in their breeding numbers nationally are found, such as curlew (*Numenius arquata*), redshank (*Tringa tetanus*) and lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*). The white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) is present, a globally threatened species of which Ireland holds one of the largest surviving populations. The Owenriff River, which flows into Lough Corrib, supports freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*). Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) use the lake and associated rivers as spawning grounds, and the critically endangered European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) is also found. Local and rare plants include Irish lady's tresses (*Spiranthes romanzoffiana*), vetch (*Vicia orobus*) and slender naiad (*Najas flexilis*). Two invasive species, zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) and African elodea (*Lagarosiphon major*) are causing significant ecological impacts. The Site is also threatened by human-induced changes in hydrological conditions and infilling of ditches, dykes, ponds, pools, marshes and pits, as well as peat extraction in adjacent habitats.

## Lough Derravaragh

Site number: 847 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Westmeath

Area: 1,120 ha | Coordinates: 53°39'59"N 07°19'59"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Lough Derravaragh. 11/06/96; West Meath; 1,120 ha; 53°40'N 007°20'W. A raised or cutaway bog with a shallow, alkaline lake and extensive reedbeds and swamps. Vegetation includes various aquatic plants dominated by reeds and sedges, several of which have a restricted distribution in Ireland, and deciduous woodland composed of native species. The site supports nationally important numbers of several species of waterbirds and provides valuable habitat for otter. Human activities include fishing, hunting, canoeing and water sports. Ramsar site no. 847.

## Lough Ennell

Site number: 848 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Westmeath

Area: 1,404 ha | Coordinates: 53°27'N 07°23'W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Lough Ennell. 11/06/96; West Meath; 1,404 ha; 53°27'N 007°23'W. A large, steep-sided lake fringed by calcareous grassland, wet marshy areas, reedbeds and mixed woodland. The site is of significance as a highly productive lake rich in its range of lower plants and invertebrate species. Its lakeshore habitats provide important refuges for waterbirds, as well as supporting rare or endemic flora. Ramsar site no. 848.

## Lough Gara

Site number: 852 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Border/Western Region (NUTS 3)

Area: 1,742 ha | Coordinates: 53°56'17"N 08°27'03"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site is a shallow limestone lake fed by two rivers, with peatland and raised bog. The lake contains numerous low-lying islands and is fringed by many different habitats such as reedbeds, freshwater marsh, lowland wet grassland and scrub. These habitats are important for feeding and roosting waterbirds: more than 1% of the global population of whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) visit, as do Greenland white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) whose population is of great concern because it has declined by more than 30% over the past ten years. A number of other wintering waterbirds are regularly recorded, such as mute swan (*Cygnus olor*) and tufted duck (*Aythya fuligula*). Other wintering birds include teal (*Anas crecca*), wigeon (*Anas penelope*), shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), common pochard (*Aythya ferina*), curlew (*Numenius arquata*) and northern lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*). Lough Gara is used for coarse fishing for pike, rudd and roach, and for kayaking, rowing, swimming and sailing. Invasive species pose a potentially significant impact to its ecological character.

## Lough Glen

Site number: 849 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Midlands Region (NUTS 3)

Area: 81 ha | Coordinates: 53°38'51"N 07°34'21"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site is a seasonal lake, which currently features very little open water except during winter floods. Water drainage poses a serious threat to its ecological character; restoration works have aimed to increase lake levels without affecting the drainage of upstream land. Marshes now dominate the Site, and the habitat may be better classified as permanent freshwater marshes with pools. Other habitats include reed swamp, alkaline fen, wet woodland, wet and dry grassland, cutaway bog colonized by heath vegetation, scrub and wet willow woodland. A range of wintering waterbirds use the Site for foraging and roosting during the winter months; over 1% of the global population of whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) are found. The Site is also used by mute swan (*Cygnus olor*), teal (*Anas crecca*), shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) and, intermittently, the near-threatened northern lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*). Wigeon were once present in large numbers, but their numbers have decreased significantly. The Site is used for scientific and educational purposes.



## Lough Iron

Site number: 850 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Westmeath

Area: 182 ha | Coordinates: 53°37'N 07°16'59"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Lough Iron. 11/06/96; West Meath; 182 ha; 53°37'N 007°17'W. The site, a long narrow lake with fringing marsh and woodlands surrounded by intensively farmed agricultural land, is one of the most important waterbird sites in the midlands. In addition to supporting large numbers of snipe and duck, there are internationally important numbers of Greenland White-fronted geese and Whooper swans wintering at the site that feed on the surrounding farmland. The marsh areas support numerous rare plant species. Ramsar site no. 850.

## Lough Oughter

Site number: 853 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: IE04 Northern and Western IE041 Border, Cavan

Area: 1,463.5 ha | Coordinates: 54°01'21"N 07°26'05"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site comprises Lough Oughter, a large lake, along with a maze of waterways, islands, small lakes and peninsulas. The Site as a whole is the best inland example of a flooded drumlin landscape in Ireland and has many rich and varied biological communities. Nowhere else in the country does such an intimate mixture of land and water occur over a comparable area. Lough Oughter is relatively shallow and considered to be a naturally eutrophic system. The extensive network of waterways feeds a range of marsh, fen, reed swamp, wet woodland, wet grassland and scrub. The Site is important for wintering whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*), great crested grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*), wigeon (*Anas Penelope*) and tufted duck (*Aythya fuligula*). A small colony of common tern (*Sterna hirundo*) breeds there. Historically the Site was important for greenland white-fronted goose; however there have been few recordings in recent decades. Lough Oughter is a popular coarse fishing venue with good stocks of bream, roach, perch and pike. It is also important for other tourism activities such as watersports. Threats to the Site include flooding, invasive species and livestock farming activities.

## Lough Owel

Site number: 851 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Westmeath

Area: 1,032 ha | Coordinates: 53°35'N 07°23'W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Lough Owel. 11/06/96; West Meath; 1,032 ha; 53°35'N 007°23'W. One of the best examples of a large, spring-fed calcareous lake in Ireland. The lake and fringing wetlands support an outstanding array of rare plant species as well as bird and fish populations of considerable interest. Adjacent farmland are feeding grounds for internationally important numbers of the Greenland White-fronted goose. Human activities include intense fishing pressure and boating. Ramsar site no. 851.

## Meenachullion Bog

Site number: 475 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Donegal

Area: 194 ha | Coordinates: 54°54'08"N 08°07'07"W | Designation dates: 30-05-1990

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

This Site is an exceptional area of lowland blanket bog, which includes a rich diversity of habitats and landscape features including mountains, exposed rock and scree, blanket bogs, dry, wet and alpine heath, upland grassland, wet grassland, rivers, lakes, scrub and woodland. Its rivers and lakes connect the site to the Gweebarra River and Gweebarra Bay. These habitats support breeding golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) and red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus scotica*), and foraging merlin (*Falco columbarius*), peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). Otters are present and are likely to use the lakes, river and streams for foraging. The Site is used for recreation and supports nutrient cycling, soil formation and pollination. *Rhododendron ponticum* is present within the National Park in which the Site is found, which threatens adjacent blanket bog and woodland as it can seed into and spread within these habitats.

## Mongan Bog

Site number: 416 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Midlands Region (NUTS 3)

Area: 127 ha | Coordinates: 53°19'38"N 07°57'03"W | Designation dates: 06-12-1988

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site is a mostly intact raised bog with classic hummock and pool formations over a large proportion of its surface. It features a very well-developed micro-topography of hummocks, pools and lawns, with the active core area being particularly wet. A variety of vascular plants, bog mosses and other bryophytes are found. Mongan Bog is important for its diversity of habitats, plant communities, birds and invertebrates. It is also an important location for biological monitoring and for research into raised bog ecology and restoration. The numbers of wintering greenland white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) and red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*) have declined and there are no recent records for these species. However, the invertebrate fauna of the pools have been shown to be highly productive. Among the rare species found are four species of moths and the rare southern horsefly *Chrysops sepulcralis*. The "Living Bog" raised bog restoration project to raise water levels, rewet the bogs and increase the national extent of bog habitat was finalized in 2021. The main threats to the Site include disturbances from an adjacent railway, a few remaining drains and fire events.

## North Bull Island

Site number: 406 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Dublin (NUTS 3)

Area: 1,436 ha | Coordinates: 53°22'08"N 06°08'03"W | Designation dates: 06-09-1988

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site covers most of an island within the wider coastal and estuarine waters of Dublin Bay. Salt marshes extend along the length of the landward shore, and a well-developed and dynamic dune system along the seaward shore, where annual vegetation of drift lines is found in places. The island shelters two intertidal lagoons divided by a causeway. The dunes and salt marshes support characteristic plant communities and a number of rare plants which are legally protected. The intertidal habitats feature a rich macrofauna, small areas of eel grass and, in the summer months, green algal mats. The wider estuarine complex provides feeding and roosting habitat for more than 1% of the global population of more than 20 wintering birds, including black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*) and light-bellied brent goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*). The Site also supports notable invertebrates. It is a very popular recreational area and important for educational and research purposes: nature conservation is a main land use within the Site. Much of the land surface of the island outside the Site is taken up by two golf courses. Due to its proximity to the Dublin urban area, the Site is impacted by urban wastewater, extensive tourism and roads.

## Owenboy

Site number: 371 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Mayo

Area: 397 ha | Coordinates: 54°05'34"N 09°27'22"W | Designation dates: 01-06-1987

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site is part of an extensive blanket bog complex with some wet heath on sloping or elevated ground, and an extensive pool system including dystrophic lakes along with springs and flushes. It is surrounded by a mosaic of cut and uncut blanket bog, agricultural grassland, conifer plantations and wind farms. There are a few scattered dwellings and small settlements in the area. A conifer plantation was removed from the Site's northern boundary under a bog restoration project funded by the European Union's LIFE programme, but another remains along the south-eastern boundary. Vegetation includes *Sphagnum* species and many sedges and mosses. The wetter domes and flushes are feeding sites for wintering white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons*), whose numbers wintering on blanket bog habitat in the west of Ireland have declined dramatically over the last 20 or 30 years. Wind turbines pose a threat to the ecological character of the Site.

## Owenduff catchment

Site number: 336 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Mayo

Area: 1,389 ha | Coordinates: 54°01'52"N 09°40'22"W | Designation dates: 31-07-1986

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site, one of the last intact active blanket bog systems in Ireland and Western Europe, comprises over 13,000 hectares of Atlantic blanket bog and mountainous terrain. It is important for its peatland and upland habitats and for the river and pool systems which lie within and flow through them. The rivers and streams provide critical spawning habitat for Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*). The Site is known to support breeding red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*) and golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), which depend on its heather for feeding. Greenland white-fronted geese (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) feed and roost in the blanket bog habitat; however their numbers have been declining in recent years. Two legally protected plants have been recorded: bog orchid (*Hammarbya paludosa*) and marsh clubmoss (*Lycopodiella inundata*). The Site is used for fishing and walking: part of the Bangor Trail lies within the site. It is part of the Wild Atlantic Nature project funded by the European Union's LIFE programme, which aims to improve the condition of habitats through working with farmers and local communities. Major threats include disturbances from wind turbines and fires.

## Pettigo Plateau

Site number: 334 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Border (NUTTS 3)

Area: 900 ha | Coordinates: 54°36'58"N 07°56'44"W | Designation dates: 31-07-1986

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site comprises a remote and extensive complex of blanket bog with wet heath, lakes and pools in an area of low hills and broad basins. The bog is mostly undisturbed and has a good range of vegetation communities and microtopographical features, such as hummocks, interconnecting pools and flushes. A number of regionally scarce plants are found, such as cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), cowberry (*Vaccinium vitisidaea*) and the bog mosses *Sphagnum fuscum* and *Sphagnum imbricatum*. Along with characteristic plant communities, the Site and wider area support mammals including otters and a number of notable birds: it is one of the few places where Greenland white-fronted geese (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) continue to utilize peatland habitats, while other typical bogland birds which breed here include red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*), snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), merlin (*Falco columbarius*), peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*). The Site is used for recreation and scientific and educational purposes. The invasive *Rhododendron ponticum* which is spreading on the blanket bog presents a serious threat to the Site, while peat extraction and drainage also affect its ecological character.

## Pollardstown Fen

Site number: 474 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Mid East (NUTTS 3)

Area: 130 ha | Coordinates: 53°11'26"N 06°50'59"W | Designation dates: 30-05-1990

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site is the largest spring-fed fen in Ireland. The fen is largely intact and the Site's habitats include semi-natural fen, damp grassland, woodland and open water. The fen supports a well-developed and specialized range of plants and animals, including a number of rare or threatened plants, invertebrates, birds and mammals. There are several rare plant species including fly orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*) and woolly feather-moss (*Tomentypnum nitens*), which is a boreal relict species. There are a number of notable invertebrates (mainly *Diptera* species) and this is the only site in Ireland and Europe to support the three species of whorl snail listed on Annex II of the European Union Habitats Directive (Geyer's whorl snail, narrow-mouthed whorl snail, and Desmoulin's whorl snail). The Site supports an indigenous fish, the brook lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*). Other threatened species include European otter (*Lutra lutra*) and marsh fritillary butterfly (*Euphydryas aurinia*). Rewetting of an area of reclaimed land has enabled the development of open water habitat, increasing the value of the Site for waterbirds. Their numbers are small but include mallard, snipe and little grebe. Occasionally, rare bird species such as marsh harrier and reed warbler visit. The main threats are related to the inflow of urban wastewater and to livestock farming.

## Raheenmore Bog

Site number: 417 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Offaly

Area: 162 ha | Coordinates: 53°20'N 07°21'W | Designation dates: 06-12-1988

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Raheenmore Bog. 06/12/88; Offaly; 162 ha; 53°20'N 007°21'W. Biogenetic Reserve; Nature Reserve. This classic example of a Midland raised bog developed in a small basin on the catchment divide between two major river systems. The peat, 15m in places, makes it the deepest known raised bog in Ireland. Vegetation is typical, with a good cover of Sphagnum mosses, but the formerly extensive hummock and hollow system is reduced due to conversion to agricultural land. Ramsar site no. 417.

## Raven, The

Site number: 333 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Wexford

Area: 589 ha | Coordinates: 52°19'59"N 06°19'W | Designation dates: 31-07-1986

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Raven, The. 31/07/86; Wexford; 589 ha; 52°20'N 006°19'W. Special Protection Area EC Directive; Nature Reserve. A sand-dune spit protecting Wexford Harbour from the sea. The tip is highly mobile, with constantly changing patterns of recurves, lagoons and sand bars. The unforested foredunes support a well-developed native vegetation, including various nationally rare species. The site provides important roosting sites for passage terns and supports a small nesting colony of the tern *Sterna albifrons*. Internationally important numbers of the globally vulnerable goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris* winter at the site and large numbers of waders roost at high tide. The site is managed for timber. Ramsar site no. 333.

## Rogerstown Estuary

Site number: 412 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Dublin

Area: 195 ha | Coordinates: 53°30'N 06°08'W | Designation dates: 25-10-1988

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Rogerstown Estuary. 25/10/88; Dublin; 195 ha; 53°30'N 006°08'W. Special Protection Area EC Directive; Nature Reserve. A small tidal embayment sheltered from the sea by a broad sand and shingle spit. Extensive areas of mud, sand and gravel are exposed at low tide. The mudflats support beds of green algae (*Enteromorpha*) and *Spartina anglica*. Numerous species of large numbers of wintering waterbirds use the tidal flats and the site is internationally important for *Branta bernicla hrota*. Human activities include bait-digging and shellfish collection. Ramsar site no. 412.

## Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary

Site number: 832 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Dublin

Area: 643 ha | Coordinates: 53°20'22"N 06°11'50"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

The Site in Dublin Bay features extensive intertidal mud and sand flats which extend for almost three kilometres at their widest, and an intertidal biogenic reef and a small section of saltmarsh. The sands support the largest stand of seagrass beds (*Zostera noltii*) on Ireland's east coast. South Dublin Bay is the premier site in Ireland for the Mediterranean gull (*Larus melanocephalus*) and is a regular autumn roosting ground for significant numbers of terns. More than 1% of the global population of light-bellied brent goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*), black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*) and bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) are present in the Site. The proximity of the city of Dublin makes the Site a very popular recreational area, while bait-digging is a regular activity on the sandy flats. It is also important for educational and research purposes. The Site is subject to natural eutrophication and is threatened by the accumulation of organic material. It is also affected by disturbances from roads, land conversions and urban wastewater.

## Slieve Bloom Mountains

Site number: 335 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Midlands Region (NUTS 3)

Area: 2,430 ha | Coordinates: 53°04'11"N 07°36'04"W | Designation dates: 31-07-1986

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

This isolated inland mountain range is the largest and most intact known area of mountain blanket bog in Ireland. It includes areas of well-developed hummock, hollow and pool systems. Several important rivers rise within the Site, including the second longest river in Ireland, the Barrow, and also the Delour and Silver rivers. The vegetation consists of a dwarf shrub and herb layer and extensive cover of *Sphagnum* moss. The Site supports a range of breeding birds, insects and mammals along with frogs, lizards and smooth newts. Together with its surrounding habitats, it is one of Ireland's most important sites for the rare breeding hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*). Other raptor species recorded are peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and merlin (*Falco columbarius*), while another emblematic bird is the red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*). The Slieve Bloom Mountains are important for walkers, mountain bikers and birdwatchers. Threats include peat extraction and the spread of conifers.

## The Broadmeadow Estuary

Site number: 833 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Dublin

Area: 546 ha | Coordinates: 53°27'46"N 06°09'41"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

This estuary is cut off from the sea by a large sand spit and includes saltmarshes, salt meadows, rocky shores, a well-developed dune ridge and sand mudflats. There are beds of blue mussels and eelgrass and extensive mats of green algae. A railway viaduct built in the 19th century crosses right through the Site, influencing the tidal regime as the estuary does not fully empty at low tide but remains as a permanent lagoon. The estuary is an important wintering site for numerous species of waterbird including the globally threatened common loon (*Gavia immer*). The Site supports more than one percent of the flyway population of the light-bellied brent goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*). It regulates water quality and flooding and mitigates the effects of storms. The inner part of the estuary is used for water sports. A section of the outer estuary has been infilled for a marina and housing development and the invasive ascidian (*Didemnum vexillum*) which is known to occur at the marina could pose a threat to several habitats. Monitoring is implemented and National Parks and Wildlife Service Conservation Rangers regularly inspect the Site.

## Tralee Bay

Site number: 440 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Kerry

Area: 861 ha | Coordinates: 52°15'59"N 09°48'W | Designation dates: 10-07-1989

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Tralee Bay. 10/07/89; Kerry; 861 ha; 52°16'N 009°48'W. Special Protection Area EC Directive; Nature Reserve. A shallow embayment fringed by sandy beaches and protected from the sea by a rocky promontory and sand spits. The site includes a compound spit of a series of pebble beaches and sand dunes and extensive saltmarsh and mudflats. This complex of habitats is of considerable geomorphological and botanical interest. The mudflats support one of the four largest areas of *Zostera* (*Z. noltii* and *Z. angustifolia*) in Ireland. In winter the reserve supports internationally important numbers of the goose *Branta bernicla hrota* and various other waterbirds. Ramsar site no. 440.

## Tramore Backstrand

Site number: 835 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Waterford

Area: 367 ha | Coordinates: 52°09'59"N 07°06'59"W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Tramore Backstrand. 11/06/96; Waterford; 367 ha; 52°10'N 007°07'W. Special Protection Area EC Directive. A shingle spit across a shallow bay with well-developed dunes and back strands that dry out at low tide. All major vegetation types are found from strand flora, through mobile dunes to stable grassland and saltmarsh. The flora is particularly rich, consisting of various protected species. The site supports nationally and internationally important numbers of shorebirds. Human activities include cockle collection. Ramsar site no. 835.

## Trawbreaga Bay

Site number: 841 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Donegal

Area: 1,003 ha | Coordinates: 55°16'59"N 07°15'W | Designation dates: 07-06-1996

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Trawbreaga Bay. 11/06/96; Donegal; 1,003 ha; 55°17'N 007°15'W. Special Protection Area EC Directive. A sheltered sea bay with no large rivers entering it. The sandy mud supports relatively small numbers of birds but there is a large variety in species including (518) Barnacle geese *Branta leucopsis*, (210) Brent geese *B. bernicla hrota*, and *Charadrius hiaticula*. Ramsar site no. 841.

## Wexford Wildfowl Reserve

Site number: 291 | Country: Ireland | Administrative region: Wexford

Area: 194 ha | Coordinates: 52°30'N 06°19'59"W | Designation dates: 15-11-1984

[View Site details in RSIS](#)

Wexford Wildfowl Reserve. 15/11/84; Wexford; 194 ha; 52°30'N 006°20'W. Special Protection Area EC Directive; Nature Reserve. Low-lying areas of empoldered farmland dissected by numerous drainage ditches created by draining an estuarine embayment. Water levels are controlled for irrigation and flood prevention. The site forms part of the world's most important wintering site for the vulnerable goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris* (world population about 30,000), which nests in Greenland, stages in Iceland and winters in Ireland and the UK. The average count of *A. a. flavirostris* wintering at the site is 32% of the world population. Several other passage and wintering waterbirds use the site. Ramsar site no. 291.