SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: RICHMOND ESKER NATURE RESERVE

SITE CODE: 000323

Richmond Esker Wood is a small wooded esker ridge situated about 6km north-west of Moylough in Co. Galway.

The most abundant tree species is Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), up to 1m in diameter and tall, but some Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Holly *(Ilex aquifolium*) are present, sometimes in locally abundant thickets. Scattered Yew (*Taxus baccata*) are also present. Spruce (*Picea* spp.) and larch (*Larix* spp.) trees are frequent, and the occasional exotic conifer, for instance hemlock (*Tsuga* spp.), is also present. The ground flora is quite diverse, especially on the summit and on the steep western slope which overlooks pasture, and is not shaded by commercial forest. A field layer with a very high cover of lime-loving mosses occurs, and Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Cowslip (*Primula veris*), Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*), Wood-sedge (*Carex sylvatica*) and False Brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*) are much in evidence, along with occasional Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), a reasonably scarce woodland plant. A visit in spring or summer will certainly show that many more interesting plants exist here.

Although this wood cannot be said to be natural, having a predominance of Beech (which is not native to Ireland) and conifers, wooded eskers are rare in the region (being mostly reclaimed or quarried). The variety of tree species allows a very good population of woodland birds to exist, including Jays (which feed on Beech masts amongst other things). Also, the ground flora has retained much of its original diversity.

The boundary of Richmond Esker Wood follows the extent of the State-owned National Nature Reserve over much of its length, but also includes a section of commercial forest outside the Reserve in the north-eastern corner. Management of this and other blocks of commercial forest should take account of and enhance the conservation interest of the site.

The presence of an old track along the crest of the esker adds historical interest to the site.

5.11.2009