SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: TURLOUGH O'GALL

SITE CODE: 000331

Turlough O'Gall lies between Shrule and Tuam, approximately 3km west of Belclare in Co. Galway. The surrounding countryside is very flat, but the turlough can be viewed from the Knockmaa ridge to the south. The floor of the basin, particularly in the east, is uneven because of bedrock. To the west there is a large expanse of level ground on limestone, which occasionally outcrops. The turlough is a dry one, and the arterial drainage of the Clare river is believed to curtail flooding.

Apart from the vicinity of the ponds, the southern half of the turlough has a simple vegetation structure made up mainly of limestone grassland, with prominent Mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*). There is a little scrub invasion with Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) bushes present.

Towards the north of the site the vegetation is more complex as this area is prone to fluctuations in water level. Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*) is widespread, but there are also sedges and grasses. Above this is an area of unmanaged grassland with Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*) amongst Creeping Willow (*Salix repens*) and Buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*).

The three depressions on the floor of the turlough are ringed by Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*). The pools themselves contain pondweeds (*Potamogeton* spp.) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). Typical fen vegetation surrounds these pools.

The area is used for grazing by some cattle, but predominantly by sheep.

Turlough O'Gall is distinct in vegetational terms in having large areas of both sedge, heath and limestone grassland – the rock outcrops and pools add habitat diversity. Its unmodified drainage adds to its conservation value.

5.11.2009