SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: FOUNTAINSTOWN SWAMP

SITE CODE: 000371

This site is located in the end of a stream valley on the northern side of Ringabella Bay in Co. Cork, just before it flows into the sea. A former lake or inlet of the sea has been grown over by a mixture of marsh plants and woodland, giving rise to a quaking swamp of unusual character.

The young woodland at the northern end consists of Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), and shows a good transition landwards into Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*). There are sheets of Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*) beneath the mossy trees, with Bugle (*Ajuga reptans*), Hemlock Water-dropwort (Oenanthe crocata) and Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), running into Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) and Pignut (*Conopodium majus*). Swamp woodland which shows no signs of former management is unusual and there are as yet no introduced species in the flora (though these do occur to the west).

The trees open out towards the coast where the vegetation becomes a rich floating fen. The main large species are Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Branched Bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*), Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and Hemlock Water-dropwort. The abundance of this latter plant in open conditions is one of the most remarkable features of the site. Normally it is a species of riverbanks, ditches and wet woodland. Scattered mounds of the Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) add variety to the community and there are also a few willow (*Salix* spp.) bushes and Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*).

The undisturbed nature of the site means that bird numbers are quite high – Mallard, Heron, Reed Bunting and Sedge Warbler occur in summer. The woodland supports Long-tailed Tit, Redpolls and other passerine species.

5.11.2009