SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: FEENAGH AND BUNNAMUCK LOUGHS

SITE CODE: 001905

Feenagh Lough is located approximately 4km south-east of Ballymote, Co. Sligo. It is a small lake set amidst rolling drumlins. Grassy slopes impinge on the lake around much of its shoreline, although the south-western side is low lying and flat.

Reed-beds dominated by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) fringe the lake around its western end with species such as Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Common Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) and Lesser Tussock-sedge (*Carex diandra*) common among the reeds. Around the lake outflow, the reed-bed vegetation becomes more luxuriant. The large sedge, Lesser Pond-sedge (*Carex acutiformis*) forms sizeable patches in a scraw dominated by Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), Mare's-tail (*Hippuris vulgaris*) and Cowbane (*Cicuta virosa*). The outflow channel itself is extensively colonised by Whorl-grass (*Catabrosa aquatica*).

Behind the reed-beds, the flat area of cutover bog is vegetated by a semi-natural grassland community which includes Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Compact Rush (*Juncus conglomeratus*).

The northern edge of the lake is separated from sloping pasture by a narrow strip of wet grassland vegetation. Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) and Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*) are frequent dominants, with an abundance of small sedges (*Carex nigra*, *C. panicea*).

Groundwater seepage sustains two small areas of calcareous fen at the eastern end. This vegetation type consists of a small sedge community, which also includes Quaking-grass (*Briza media*), Grass-of -parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*), Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*), Marsh Arrowgrass (*Triglochin palustris*), Broad-leaved Cottongrass (*Eriophorum latifolium*), Early Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*) and Blunt-flowered Rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*).

Fen bryophytes are abundant also (for example *Ctenidium molluscum* and *Drepanocladus revolvens*). Aquatic plants colonise the open water on Feenagh Lough. These include Yellow Water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*), Broad-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*), Least Bur-reed (*Sparganium minimum*) and Ivy-leaved Duckweed (*Lemna trisulca*).

Bunnamuck Lough has a small area of open water but it occurs in a much larger fen derived in part from flooded cutover bog. On the west side, this largely consists of Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) standing over flooded ground with abundant Bogbean. Around the lake is a floating mat of vegetation with Lesser Pond-sedge, Bottle Sedge and Cowbane. Marsh Stitchwort (*Stellaria palustris*) grows quite frequently in this community. Greater Spearwort (*Ranunculus lingua*) is occasional in channels, as is Hemp-agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*). These species are not

generally frequent. The latter one, in particular, is not commonly found in the northern half of the country.

In summer Feenagh Lough holds a pair of Great Crested Grebe and Mute Swan and about 4 pairs of Mallard. Water Rail and Moorhen also nest, perhaps also with Teal. In winter a flock of 80 wildfowl occurs at maximum, made up of Tufted Duck, Wigeon, Teal and Mallard.

This small site is of ecological interest because it is a complex wetland area with a very good selection of plant communities. It contains eight species which are rare in the catchment including one, Hemp-agrimony, which was seen nowhere else.

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