SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: DERRYGOLAN ESKER

SITE CODE: 000896

On top of an esker near Derrygolan, Co. Westmeath, a nationally important population of the rare Green-winged Orchid (*Orchis morio*) is thriving. Although this plant has declined dramatically throughout the country in recent times, this site contains one of the largest known populations of this legally protected species.

This site is also of conservation importance because it is one of the few remaining examples of an unexploited esker, a habitat which is becoming increasingly rare due to the extraction of glacial sands and gravel. Part of the western side near the county border has been quarried for gravel, but the eastern half is intact and supports herb-rich calcareous grassland with thorn scrub on the lower banks.

13.11.2009