SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: RAHEEN LOUGH

SITE CODE: 000917

Raheen Lough lies 10km north of Mountmellick in Co. Offaly. It is set in pasture grazed by cattle and sheep. There is an inflowing stream, and the absence of a surface outfall may indicate that there is underground drainage. This may help to explain the fluctuating water levels that sometimes inundate the immediate shore. The basin is stoney bottomed and shallow. The water appears to be clean, supporting the pollution intolerant Alternate Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum alterniflorum*). However its main interest lies in the variety and numbers of wildfowl and waders that it attracts. In this it has a particularly important role because open water bodies are infrequent in the area.

Apart from the open water, the level wet pasture is much used by feeding birds, and in some places has typical marshland vegetation. The most important of these areas lie to the south-west of the open water, here, in order to be unambiguous, the boundary includes the entire adjacent field, thus sloping pasture of no intrinsic interest is also included. The north shore slopes down to the water and is surrounded by scrub and woodland, which is also important for birds of the lake edge, such as Warblers.

Local bird watchers are well acquainted with the species that use this site such as swans, including Whooper Swans, diving ducks, including Goldeneye and Pochard, dabbling ducks, mainly Mallard but including Shoveler and Pintail, waders including Greenshank, Jack Snipe, and Purple Sandpipers, and other species such as Heron, Kingfisher and Grebes. The site is of at least local importance on ornithological grounds.

13.11.2009