SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BALLYHOE LOUGH

SITE CODE: 001594

Ballyhoe Lough is located on the Monaghan/Meath border and is a fairly acid, peaty lough, contrasting markedly to most of the loughs in County Meath, which are calcareous. The lake is a very popular fishing lake and has a good stock of coarse fish.

The lough is now divided in two by a narrow strip of land covered by willow (*Salix* spp.) trees, Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). Around the edge is a fringe of Common Reed with some Common Club-rush (*Schoenoplectus lacustris*) and White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*). There is a peninsula, which cuts the lake in two, included in the site and it contains fields of wet grassland which are dominated by Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*). The islands in the lough are covered with trees and shrubs and like the lakeshore fringed by Common Reed. They are believed to be crannógs.

The lough is of local importance mainly because it is acid and peaty, in contrast to most loughs in County Meath. In addition, the bird populations present are of great interest and this combination of interests makes the lake one of the more unusual lakes in the county. Ecological interest is supplemented by the discovery of bones, mainly skulls and antlers, of the Irish Giant Deer (*Megaloceros giganteus*) which have been found in and around the lough. The majority of the finds were located in the narrow neck of land dividing the loughs. It is thought that the deer used to cross at this point in the valley to the hills towards the south-west.

23.11.2009