SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: KINLOOEY LOUGH

SITE CODE: 001518

Kinlooey Lough is situated in a low lying basin amongst the drumlin hills east of Westport in Co. Mayo. Located on the transition between the Carboniferous shales and limestone, the local drainage is complex, with a variety of sinkholes and depressions, especially to the south of the lake.

Seepage around the sinkholes produces an interesting flora with fen and peat-loving plants, such as Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*), and Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*).

On the east side of the lake, fragments of interesting woodland occur on stoney drumlin-soil. Willows (*Salix* spp.), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) make up most of the larger trees – some scattered Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) with an understorey of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) is also present. The ground flora is rich, with at least 25 species. It is calcicole in type but includes Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*) and Bitter-vetch (*Lathyrus montanus*). Two unusual grasses which also occur are Bearded Couch (*Elymus caninus*) and Giant Fescue (*Festuca gigantea*).

The lake itself is bordered partly by limestone grassland and partly by raised bog. The shore is therefore both stony and peaty; the former type has vegetation including Small-fruited Yellow-sedge (*Carex serotina*), Water-pepper (Persicaria hydropiper), Small Water-pepper (Persiacaria minor) and a black moss *Cinclidotus fontinaloides* which suggests that the water level fluctuates during the year. Some of the peat has been eroded and show a number of old pine stumps, still in the position of growth.

The woodland habitat is inhabited by passerine birds, while the lake is used in winter by Tufted Duck and Teal.

In the bushy places around the wood a variety of butterflies occur.

Freshwater mussel (*Anodonta* spp.) is a conspicuous member of the lake fauna, while Brown Trout are also present.

Unfortunately, felling of the wooded area has substantially reduced the area of intact woodland, while a fertilisation experiment was carried out in the lake in the 1950s. Ironically, this experiment has produced a fair amount of data on water quality and its implications on the growth rates of the Brown Trout.

Kinlooey Lough is a diverse site with many habitats occurring within a small area. One of the most interesting features is the juxtaposition of acid and alkaline habitats

within the lake. It is also a very suitable area for outdoor education in field biology and geography.

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