SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: EASKY RIVER

SITE CODE: 001665

This site includes the steeply sloping woodlands on the banks of the Easky River approximately 1km south of Easky and 5.5km north-west of Dromore West. The underlying bedrock is limestone but the river is mainly bordered by glacial drift which is very steeply sloping.

The 1978 County Report for Sligo gives the following description of the site.

A line of woodland is found along the river for much of its length and consists mainly of the introduced species Horse-chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). Native species occurring in the woodland include elm (*Ulmus* spp.), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), oak (*Quercus* spp.) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*). A rich ground flora occurs beneath including Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*), Bugle (*Ajuga reptans*), Marsh Hawk's-beard (*Crepis paludosa*), Lords-and-ladies (*Arum maculatum*), Common Twayblade (*Listera ovata*), Hairy-brome (*Bromopsis ramosa*) and Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*). Guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*) is the commonest species in the shrub layer.

Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) dominates the upper and lower slopes of the drift deposits, and calcareous marsh plant communities arise wherever water seepage from the drift occurs. This type of community is best developed on the eastern side of the river and includes Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), rushes (*Juncus articulatus* and *J. inflexus*), sedges (*Carex hostiana* and *C. lepidocarpa*), Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*), Blue Moor-grass (*Sesleria caerulea*), Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*), Few-flowered Spike-rush (*Eleocharis quinqueflora*), Grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*), Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*), two species of marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza* spp.) and Zigzag Clover (*Trifolium medium*).

Marsh Helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), a species listed in the Irish Red Data Book, occurs within the wetlands.

The main land use within the site is grazing by cattle and the poaching caused by their hooves is damaging the ground flora.

The calcareous flushed areas hold interesting plant communities including several unusual species for the area. The woodland has a rich ground flora and is of some importance locally for its bird and mammal populations.

24.11.2009