SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BALLYNAFID LAKE AND FEN

SITE CODE: 000673

Ballynafid Lake is a small midland lake, some 10ha in extent, located just north-east of Lough Owel in Co. Westmeath. The lake is fringed by a wide band of reed-swamp dominated by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Common Club-rush (*Schoenoplectus lacustris*). The reed-swamp grades into freshwater marsh containing Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) and Greater Spearwort (*Ranunculus lingua*) with a band of calcareous fen dominated by Tawny Sedge (*Carex hostiana*) and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) behind the freshwater marsh. On the western side of the lake, reed-swamp grades into woodland dominated by Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) with some willows (*Salix* spp.) and pine (*Pinus* spp.). Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) dominates a rather species-poor ground flora. The lake supports a good population of coarse fish (Bream, Rudd) and is a popular angling venue, due mainly to its close proximity to the road.

Ballynafid Lake is a very important site for rare invertebrates and insects some of which are internationally rare. The lake also displays nice patterns of vegetation zonation which are rarely seen so well-developed in midland lakes. The transition from marsh to calcareous fen, particularly along the south-eastern edge of the lake, is of great interest. Plant species of restricted distribution occurring at the site include Fen Bedstraw (*Galium uliginosum*) and Marsh Pea (*Lathyrus palustris*), the latter species being only recently removed from the list of protected plant species.

Although the lake is too small to have much ornithological interest it does support a large population of Snipe along with some Mallard and Mute Swan.

11.11.2009