SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: COOLBARREEN LOUGH

SITE CODE: 000481

Coolbarreen Lough is situated about 3km north-west of Westport, Co. Mayo. It lies in a large inter-drumlin hollow near the southern edge of the Westport drumlin belt. The land slopes steeply down to the lake, especially on the southern side. Substantial colonisation by plants has taken place so that the area of open water is smaller than is apparent from the map.

Common Club-rush (*Schoenoplectus lacustris*), Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*) form stands in the open water, but the chief invasive species which create a floating mat of vegetation are Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*), Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) – Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*) grows through this mat in wetter places, while willows (*Salix* spp.) grow in drier places. A protected aquatic plant Slender Naiad (*Najas flexilis*) has been recorded from one of the lake basins.

Marsh plants such as Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*) and willowherbs (*Epilobium palustre* and *E. hirsutum*) are found. In places, acidification of this fen flora occurs, with the presence of a variety of mosses – *Aulacomnium* spp., *Hylocomium splendens*, *Pleurozium* spp. and *Sphagnum capillifolium*.

Between the floating vegetation and the bank a zone of enrichment occurs from surface drainage. Blunt-flowered Rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*) grows in this area.

Bird species recorded at the site include Moorhen, Mallard, Tufted Duck and Snipe.

Otter spraints were found during the recent survey.

This site is of interest as it is a good example of a small lake system with marsh vegetation. The areas which show the early stages of raised bog formation are of particular ecological interest.

6.11.2009