SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: DRUMCAH, TOPRASS & CORTAL LOUGHS

SITE CODE: 001462

This site comprises three lakes which are situated approximately 6km west of Dundalk. The area surrounding these three lakes is drumlin country. The hills enclose basins which in three places form shallow lakes. Comparison of the existing water surface area with earlier maps indicates that a reduction in lake size has occurred. Semi-aquatic vegetation is now extensive occupying, in places, half the lake surface. As sedimentary deposition is not apparent, a reduction in lake size is attributed to an earlier drainage scheme on the lower parts of the River Fane.

Cortial Lough has an extensive marginal marshland dominated by Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), interspersed with grassland. More aquatic species present include Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Yellow Water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*) and White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*). The marshland contains a few willows (*Salix* spp.) which suggest its drying out from open water may have been relatively recent. Coniferous trees have been planted in one part of the marshland.

Toprass Lough has become almost entirely a marshland. The dominant semi-aquatic plant species is Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and there is also some Branched Bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*) present. Fool's Water-cress (*Apium nodiflorum*) is common. The occasional remaining pools contain Yellow Water-lily.

Drumcah Lough resembles Cortial Lough in its vegetation. At Cortial Lough the marginal marshland has some willow cover but tree cover is sparse.

The three lakes represent the largest areas of open water in Co. Louth. The extent of the marsh transition from open water to grassland also makes these lakes of great interest.

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