SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BALLYGAWLEY LOUGH

SITE CODE: 001909

Ballygawley Lough is situated about 4km west of Ballysadare close to The Union Wood and Unshin River Natural Herritage Areas. The catchment of the lough lies on acid Mica Schists which form the Ox Mountains and much on the surrounding area has been planted with conifer trees.

The Lough is fringed with reed swamp in which Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Common Club-rush (*Schoenoplectus lacustris*) are dominant. Sedges (*Carex lasiocarpa* and *C. rostrata*), Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*), Lesser Bur-reed (*Sparganium minimum*), Water Lobelia (*Lobelia dortmanna*) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) are all common here.

Wet woodland occurs behind the reed swamp where conifers have not been planted all the way to the Lough shore. Species in the wet woodland include Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea* subsp. *cinerea*), birch (*Betula* spp.) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). The understorey contains sedges such as Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*). Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) and Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*) occur in the woodlands at the south end of the Lough. Grey Sedge (*Carex divulsa*) occurs in the woodland on the eastern shore.

Small areas of old cutaway bog are adjacent to the lough and those are dominated by Purple Moor-grass, Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*). Scrub of Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) is invading this area.

This site contains a buffer zone of at least 50m surrounding the lough to protect the immediate catchment for both water quality and to protect the seclusion of the lough for wildfowl. Conifer plantation and native woodlands are therefore included within the site. Mature oak (*Quercus* spp.) woodland occurs at the north-east end of the site and has a rich dry acid woodland ground flora including Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*), Broad Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*), Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) and Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*).

The lough holds considerable numbers of wildfowl at times during the winter. The most numerous species are Wigeon (Max. 416 in 1992), Teal (167 in 1992), Whooper Swan (71 in 1992), Mallard (38 in 1992) and Mute Swan (23 in 1992). Cormorant and Goldeneye also occur on the Lough.

The dragonfly fauna is reported to be interesting being different from most of the lowland loughs in the area.

This site is very secluded and shooting does not occur on the Lough.

Ballygawley Lough is a relatively rare type of lough for the area, having all its catchment on acid Schists instead of the basic limestone which dominates the area.

The marginal vegetation is well developed and the seclusion created by the surrounding trees seems to favour the wildfowl.

27.11.2009