SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: GLENCREE VALLEY

SITE CODE: 001755

The Glencree Valley is a glacial valley which lies at the north-eastern edge of the Wicklow Mountains. The Glencree River, which flows through the valley, is a good example of a fast flowing upland river with many boulders and often brown peaty coloured water.

The site includes three areas of deciduous woodland which flank the river. The main tree species in the woods is Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*), with Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) locally abundant. The shrub layer in the woods is variable. Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Downy Birch and young Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) are the most common species. The field layer is generally sparse, and includes Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*). Mosses are fairly abundant and form carpets over the boulders. The moss species include *Polytrichum commune*, *Rhytidiadelphus* spp. and *Thuidium tamarascinum*.

In places Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) is common and here the field layer is more diverse with Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*), Common Dog-violet (*Viola riviniana*), Herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) and Germander Speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*). Patches of willow (*Salix* spp.) are found in the wetter areas.

Regeneration in the woods is generally poor due to grazing. Several deer were seen and numerous animal tracks traverse the site. Underplanting of the woods has taken place in some areas, notably with Western Hemlock-spruce (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*).

On the south side of the river between the wooded areas there are species-rich boggy flushes with clumps of Sphagnum moss (*Sphagnum* spp.) and areas dominated by sedges (*Carex* spp.) and rushes (*Juncus* spp.). Other species include Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*), Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Common Milkwort (*Polygala vulgaris*) and occasional low hummocks of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillis*) and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*).

The bird life of the valley has been examined recently. Dipper and Grey Wagtail breed along the river, while Jay, Long-eared Owl, Woodcock and Blackcap are present in the woods.

The importance of the site is that it is a good example of deciduous woodland even though it is rather fragmented. The presence of an upland river and boggy flushes add to the habitat diversity of the site.

25.11.2009