SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LOUGH SEWDY

SITE CODE: 000689

This small, shallow lake, which is set in gently undulating, low-lying hills of glacial drift is situated 1.5km north-west of Ballymore in Co. Westmeath. It is bounded on its western margin by a cutaway raised bog.

Alkaline fen occurs on the margins of the current area of open water, on the former lake bed and such species as Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) and Long-stalked Yellow-sedge (*Carex lepidocarpa*) are found. Closer to the open water, the wetter ground supports Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*), Lesser Water-plantain (*Baldellia ranunculoides*) and Blunt-flowered Rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*). Directly fringing the lake, beds of Common Reed, with willows (*Salix* spp.), Greater Spearwort (*Ranunculus lingua*) and Fen Pondweed (*Potamogeton coloratus*) occur. Of note is the presence of Marsh Helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), Fen Bedstraw (*Galium ulignosum*) and Fibrous Tussock-sedge (*Carex appropinquata*) all of which are scarce species in Ireland.

A variety of semi-natural habitats are also included in the site. Sedge-dominated vegetation surrounds a small lake to the south-east and also dominates old fields to the north-east. To the west, old cutaway bog colonised by Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) grades into sedge-rich marsh. These habitats, along with an area of small mixed woodland composed mainly of Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) add to the diversity of the site.

The threatened Red Data Book species, Round-leaved Wintergreen (*Pyrola rotundfolia*), occurs within the site. This species, which is largely confined to the Midlands, is threatened by reclamation and drainage of its habitat.

Lough Sewdy is also host to a variety of breeding birds such as Moorhen, Coot, Mute Swan, Great-crested Grebe, Water Rail, Little Grebe and Grasshopper Warbler.

The area is an important local amenity with fishing and shooting being common practices. Reclaimed lakeshore and old cutaway bog is used for cattle grazing. These have resulted in some damage to lakeshore vegetation, in particular the loss of fen vegetation on the eastern lakeshore.

Lough Sewdy is of conservation importance for the variety of habitats of good quality that it includes, for the rare and scarce plant species it supports and as a site for a variety of bird species.

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