SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BALLYNEILL MARSH

SITE CODE: 001846

About 10km north of Tipperary town, Ballyneill Marsh, named after the townland in which it mainly occurs, is a series of small kettle-hole depressions formed at the end of the last ice age by lenses of ice.

They are now occupied by open water, and fen communities, mainly as floating scraw vegetation. Discrete kettle-holes show the development of different vegetation, partly due to different levels of nutrient enrichment from fertiliser runoff, partly due to differences in local enrichment with calcium, and presumably partly due to chance establishment. Examples of both rich-fen and poor-fen communities are found here.

Typically open water contains such species as Broad-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*) and duckweeds (*Lemna* spp.). Reed-beds are widespread, dominated by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) with such species as Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*). Outside the reed-beds, the scraw is variable with areas of tall herb fen, with species such as Purple-loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*). Elsewhere the vegetation is shorter and features short sedges, in particular Long-stalked Yellow-sedge (*Carex lepidocarpa*) and Lesser Tussock-sedge (*Carex diandra*), both of these species are restricted to calcium flushed wetlands and are rare in the South of the Republic. These are probably the most extensive stands in South Tipperary.

Kettle-holes have been quite prone to infilling in Ireland, and a great many of these interesting features have been lost. The development of a series of remarkably natural wetland plant communities at this site is most unusual and the site is of ecological interest for that reason.

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