SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: DEVIL'S GLEN

SITE CODE: 000718

Devil's Glen is located about 2.5km north-west of Ashford in Co. Wicklow. It is a rocky gorge up to 100m deep, through which the Vartry river flows in an easterly direction. Exposed rock-faces occur on both the northern and southern slopes of the gorge. The soils covering most of the slopes are thin acid brown earths.

The steep slopes on the northern side of the gorge are covered with broadleaved woodland dominated by Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*), with occasional Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) on the lower slopes. The Sessile Oaks are fairly even-aged at about 100 years. The shrub layer is generally sparse with Holly *(Ilex aquifolium*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) being the main species. The ground flora is typical of an oak wood on thin acid soil. The main species is Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*), which carpets the ground in most places. Also present are occasional clumps of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), both of which are indicative of acidic soils. Ferns are locally common and include mainly Broad Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*) and Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*). The moss cover is extensive in shaded damp areas - the main species are *Thuidium tamariscinum* and *Polytrichum commune*. Several rare bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) have been recorded from The Devil's Glen, namely *Diplophyllum obtusifolium, Grimmia hartmanii, Rhynchostegium alopecuroides* and *Zygodon rupestris*.

The slopes on the southern side of the gorge have a mixed woodland cover with conifers and deciduous trees. The ground flora is variable, often similar to that described above. In shaded areas, other woodland species are found, these include Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Lords-and-ladies (*Arum maculatum*), Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*) and the ferns Soft Shield-fern (*Polystichum setiferum*) and Polypody (*Polypodium vulgare*).

The Vartry river and the streams flowing into the gorge add to the habitat diversity of the site - the waterfall is of particular note as Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*) has been found growing abundantly just above it. A number of scarce plants have been recorded on this site, including the grasses Wood Millet (*Milium effusum*) and Wood Fescue (*Festuca altissima*).

South of the Devil's Glen is another area of mixed woodland consisting mainly of Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Sessile Oak, Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), European Larch (*Larix decidua*) and other conifers. This area is less important on ecological grounds, but as it is a continuation of the woodland it provides a habitat for the fauna of the area.

The Devil's Glen woodland supports a range of passerine bird species.

The site is important as a fine example of a mostly wooded, steep-sided rocky gorge. The presence of a number of rare or scarce plants and birds adds interest to the site. Devil's Glen is also scenically very attractive and is an important amenity area.

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