SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: TIMAHOE ESKER

SITE CODE: 000421

Eskers are raised ridges of sand and gravel which were deposited under the ice mass, during the last period of glaciation. They provide well-drained base-rich substrates for plants. This site consists of two small eskers which lie approximately 1km north of the town of Timahoe in Co. Laois.

The esker ridges at this site support broad-leaved woodland dominated by multi-stemmed Hazel (*Corylus avellana*). Also present are Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), oak (*Quercus* spp.), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) occurs frequently at this site. It is a non-native tree which has naturalized in Ireland. Beneath the canopy, the ground flora typically includes Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) and violets (*Viola* spp.).

Occasional gaps in the canopy occur and here Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) are found.

These eskers are currently owned by the State, and constitute a Nature Reserve. Other eskers in the vicinity have been destroyed by the quarrying of their sand and gravel, this trend is apparent on a nationwide scale and esker habitats are diminishing, and therefore under threat. The Timahoe Eskers are important as among the best of the few intact eskers remaining in Co. Laois.

6.11.2009