SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: FIN & RISKEEN LOUGHS

SITE CODE: 001907

This site consists of a pair of lakes and their associated wetlands. The site is situated approximately 14km south-west of Collooney. The area is predominantly limestone geology overlain by drift deposits and peat. This site is one of a series of wetland Natural Heritage Areas in the Owenmore River Catchment.

Fin Lough is a small roadside lough with an extensive linear fen at its head. The eastern side of the lough has a stoney substrate with a number of aquatic plants growing there. Species here include Curled Pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*), Canadian Waterweed (*Elodea canadensis*), Rigid Hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*), Amphibious Bistort (*Persicaria amphibia*), Marsh Horsetail (*Equisetum palustre*), Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*) and Greater Water-moss (*Fontinalis antipyretica*). The lake margins are almost completely fringed by a narrow circle of Common Reed (*Phragmities australis*). A more extensive reed-bed development occurs at the north end and has an understorey of Bottle Sedge (*Corex rostrata*), Marsh Horsetail, Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*).

At the south-west end of Lough Fin an extensive fen and scraw has developed. Species common in the fen include sedges (*Carex echinata*, *C. nigra*, *C. rostrata*), Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), Bogbean, Devils-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*), Ragged-Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*), and Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*). Tussocks of mosses also occur here. A wet quaking scraw has built out from the fen for a crannóg. This area is dominated by Bogbean, Creeping Bent, Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) and Marsh Pennywort.

An area of old cutaway occurs to the south of the fen on Lough Fin. This area is sedge-rich (including *Carex hostiana*) and rich in rushes (including *Juncus conglomeratus*). Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) and Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) also occur here. An understorey of mosses occurs here including *Sphagnum papillosum*, *S. capillifolium*, *Aulacomnium palustre* and *Hylocomium splendens*.

Lough Riskeen is a much smaller lake and much of the surrounding wetlands have been drained. The vegetation types are similar to Lough Fin. An extensive area of calcareous seepage from the underlying bedrock occurs at the south end. This area is dominated by rushes (including *Juncus subnodulosus*) and sedges (*Carex lepidiocarpa*, *C. hostiana*, *C. flacca*), Grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*). Creeping Willow (*Salix repens*) and the uncommon Variegated Horsetail (*Equisetum variegatum*) also occur here. Another small fen lies at the head of the lough and this is characterised by huge tussocks of Greater Tussock-sedge.

Lough Risteen has several higher plants growing in the open water including White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*), Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*), Canadian Pondweed and Bulrush.

A species-rich hay meadow occurs to the south of Riskeen Lough. This is included within the site. Species of note here include Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), Marsh-marigold and Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*).

Bird species recorded at this site include Snipe, Jack Snipe, Mute Swan, Whooper Swan, Mallard and Coot.

Grazing by cattle is significantly altering the fen at Lough Fin.

These lakes are fine examples of a distinctive type found on the southern tributary of the Owenbeg River. The drift cover is thin and a limestone influence is frequent in the fen and cutover vegetation. This gives rise to a variety of vegetation and plant species. The presence of Variegated Horsetail is notable.

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