

Site Name: Dromore Woods and Loughs SAC

Site Code: 000032

Situated in central Clare, 9 km north-west of Ennis, the Dromore Woods and Loughs SAC site lies on the southern edge of the Clare limestone. The topography is a continuation of the Burren type landscape although at a lower elevation, with most of the land lying between 15 and 35 m. The site includes several lakes which are mostly linked by the River Fergus.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[3150] Natural Eutrophic Lakes
[6430] Hydrophilous Tall Herb Communities
[8240] Limestone Pavement*
[1303] Lesser Horseshoe Bat (<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>)
[1355] Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)

The site is very diverse and contains a mosaic of different habitats: limestone pavement, scrub, dry broadleaved woodland, mixed woodland, lakes, rivers, grasslands, cut-away bog, fen, freshwater marsh and reedbeds.

The site contains extensive areas of limestone pavement, with a covering of soil which is thin or absent, interrupted by corridors and pockets of slightly deeper soil. The limestone pavement on the site is floristically species-rich and occurs in association with calcareous grassland, Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)/Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) scrub, lakes and fen.

The natural vegetation of much of the site is Hazel and Ash scrub, but there has been considerable planting of conifers - mostly Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*) and Larch (*Larix* spp.), and to a lesser extent Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). Much of the broadleaved woodland on the site has been underplanted with conifer species.

The lakes on the site are naturally eutrophic, a habitat listed on Annex I E.U. Habitats Directive, and contain some fringing reed beds of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*) and large beds of Pondweed (*Potamogeton*), including *P. lucens* and *P. perfoliatus*.

Eutrophic tall herb vegetation occurs as part of the wet fringing vegetation around the lakes and along the river. Characteristic species of the habitat include Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and Purple Loosetrife (*Lythrum salicaria*).

The site supports a wide range of plants and animals, including several rarities and important populations. The rare lichen, *Usnea glabrescens*, known from counties Clare, Cork and Galway has been recorded from the site. Dromore Lough holds regionally/locally important numbers of waterfowl (numbers are the average of two counts made in one season, between 1984 and 1987): Little Grebe (20), Whooper Swan (73), a species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, Wigeon (130), Gadwall (4), Teal (80), Tufted Duck (169), Coot (152), Lapwing (350) and Curlew (50). The site also provides ideal habitat for birds of prey; Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Hen Harrier, a species also listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, have all been recorded.

Mammals found on the site include Pine Marten, Otter, Badger, Fox and Stoat. The site is of particular importance for its population of Pine Marten, an uncommon, Red Data Book species. Otter is a species that is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site also includes a nursery roost for a population (more than 400 individuals) of Lesser Horseshoe Bat. This nursery colony is one of the biggest in the country and of international importance. Lesser Horseshoe Bat is a rare and threatened species that is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The roost is owned and managed by the Heritage Council.

The site is also of importance for its invertebrate fauna, which includes several rarities: *Agonum lugens* (Order Coleoptera), *Anasimyia transfuga* (Order Diptera, Family Syrphidae), *Xylota tarda* (Order Diptera, Family Syrphidae), *Dyschirius luedersi* (Order Coleoptera), *Pherbellia argyra* (Order Diptera, Family Syrphidae) and *Geomyza majuscula* (Order Diptera).

Dromore Woods and Loughs is of considerable conservation significance for the wide diversity of habitats found (including three listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive) and for the important populations of rare and threatened mammals, birds and invertebrates that it supports. Part of the site has been designated as a Statutory Nature Reserve.