

Site Name: Lough Nagreany Dunes SAC

Site Code: 000164

This site comprises a complex of sand dune habitats, including dune heath and machair. It is located on the north-western side of the Fanad Peninsula in Co. Donegal, near the mouth of Mulroy Bay, approximately 30 km north of Millford. The area is underlain by granite, which outcrops in places.

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):

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| [2110] Embryonic Shifting Dunes |
| [2120] Marram Dunes (White Dunes) |
| [2130] Fixed Dunes (Grey Dunes)* |
| [2140] Decalcified <i>Empetrum</i> Dunes* |
| [2150] Decalcified Dune Heath* |
| [2170] Dunes with Creeping Willow |
| [2190] Humid Dune Slacks |
| [21A0] Machairs* |
| [3130] Oligotrophic to Mesotrophic Standing Waters |
| [1833] Slender Naiad (<i>Najas flexilis</i>) |

The dune system is of particular interest as it shows a fine gradation from fixed dunes, to machair, and to dune heath, and includes several habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The fixed dunes are relatively intact and have typical species such as Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*) and Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*). In the mature area of fixed dune the vegetation is dominated by Burnet Rose (*Rosa pimpinellifolia*), Creeping Willow (*Salix repens*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). The dune heath has Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) and, of particular note, Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*). The machair plains are species rich and frequent species include Lady's Bedstraw, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil and White Clover (*Trifolium repens*) in dry areas, along with Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*) and Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*) in wetter areas. Dune slacks with a characteristic dune slack flora have been recorded at Lough Nagreany and Doaghmore. Other dune types which occur include embryonic dunes and marram dunes. The embryonic dunes are dominated by Sand Couch (*Elymus farctus*), and companion species include Lyme-grass (*Leymus arenarius*) and Sea Rocket (*Cakile maritima*).

Ragwort (*Senecio jacobea*), which is indicative of grazing pressure, is widespread throughout the site.

Several species-rich loughs occur within the site. These generally contain a fringe of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*), with Water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Purple-loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) and Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*). The rare Slender Naiad (*Najas flexilis*), which is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive and also in the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015, is found in Lough Nagreany. This lake is an oligotrophic to mesotrophic lake, an Annex I listed habitat under the E.U. Habitats Directive. Gortnatraw Lough is also included in the site. This lake is particularly species-rich and its chemistry is unusual, being in a catchment of acid rocks overlain by sand.

The Lough Nagreany site provides good feeding habitat for Choughs which breed locally. Lapwing breed within the site.

Although grazing is severe in places, this relatively small site displays an excellent range of largely undisturbed sandy habitat types, including several listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Of particular interest is the gradation from fixed dune to decalcified dune heath and machair. The occurrence of a small area of decalcified fixed dunes with *Empetrum nigrum* is of special importance owing to its rarity in Ireland. Lough Nagreany, while a shallow lake, supports a population of the Annex II species *Najas flexilis*, and Chough, an Annex I species on the E.U. Birds Directive, feeds within the site.