

Site Name: Ballinskelligs Bay and Inny Estuary SAC

Site Code: 000335

This site is located at the western end of the Iveragh Peninsula, Co. Kerry, close to the town of Waterville. It comprises the marine waters of Ballinskelligs Bay, as far out as the five-fathom line, some adjoining terrestrial areas and the estuary of the River Inny upstream to Breaigh townland. The site extends from Horse Island at the western end of the bay round to Rineen Point at its south-eastern side. Much of the site comprises shallow marine water, Ballinskelligs Bay, but it also supports a wide variety of other habitats, including intertidal mud/sand flats, sandy beaches, shingle, tidal river channels, sea cliffs, wet and dry grassland, freshwater marshes, swamps, cut-away bog, scrub, Bracken and saltmarsh.

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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| [1330] Atlantic Salt Meadows |
| [1410] Mediterranean Salt Meadows |
| [1395] Petalwort (<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>) |

Two types of saltmarsh occur on the site. Mediterranean salt meadows are characterised by the presence of Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*), while species such as Thrift (*Armeria maritima*) and Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*) are typical of Atlantic salt meadows.

A small area of sand dunes near to the mouth of the estuary supports a population of the rare liverwort species, Petalwort (*Petalophyllum ralfsii*). This species is protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999 and is also listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

The site is used in the winter by nationally important numbers of Common Scoter (953 individuals) and Ringed Plover (147 individuals), both counts from 1994/95-96/97. The site is also commonly used by waders such as Oystercatcher (130 individuals) and Curlew (140 individuals). A colony of Grey Seal, a protected species, occurs within the bay.

Human usage of the site includes fishing and tourist activities.

The site is of considerable conservation significance, particularly for the presence of two types of saltmarsh listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive and of a population of *Petalophyllum ralfsii*, a species listed on Annex II of this Directive.

Additionally, the site is of significance for the nationally important populations of Common Scoter and Ringed Plover that use it.