



Site Name: Hugginstown Fen SAC

Site Code: 000404

Hugginstown Fen is situated approximately 4 km south-west of Ballyhale, Co. Kilkenny. The site consists of a relatively large, isolated area of swamp and floating fen developed in a small valley in hilly country. It is underlain by limestone glacial till overlying and surrounded by acid Old Red Sandstone. The catchment is relatively small and iron-rich springs are an important source of water for the wetland.

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):

[7230] Alkaline Fens

The northern third of the fen is dominated by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) swamps, with some small areas of open water near springs. The remainder of the site consists of species-rich fen, partly developed on mats of floating vegetation, dominated by a tall herb community in which Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*), Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and Lesser Tussock-sedge (*Carex diandra*) are common. Other species present include Nodding Bur-marigold (*Bidens cernua*), Marsh St. John's-wort (*Hypericum elodes*), Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) and Tubular Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*).

Species-rich rush/Purple Moor-grass (Junco-Molinion) grassland occurs in drained areas at the southern and northern end and around the margins at the peat-mineral interface. Small clumps of willow (*Salix* spp.) occur occasionally on the fen margin. An interesting feature of this area is that the water flows overground initially then disappears abruptly underneath the floating fen vegetation.

Two uncommon insect species recorded from Hugginstown Fen are Scarce Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes dryas*) and the Hoverfly *Parhelophis consimilis*. The Common Frog, a Red Data Book species, is frequent at the site.

Although this site has been damaged to some extent by drainage, especially in the southern part, it contains an important example of an alkaline fen, a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive and remains one of the most interesting and diverse fen sites in Ireland.