

Site Name: Ballymaglancy Cave, Cong SAC

Site Code: 000474

Ballymaglancy Cave is a linear stream cave which supports a population of Lesser Horseshoe Bat. It is situated approximately 3 km west of Cong in Co. Mayo.

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):

[8310] Caves

[1303] Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)

The cave entrance is approximately 2 m high and 3 m wide, but inside the cave widens and the first 50 m offers several possible routes that eventually converge to form one passage. Near the entrance there is a good example of Carboniferous colonial coral in the floor, next to a roof collapse covered in gour pools. The stream then descends in steps and the passageway is well-decorated. There are excellent curtains and other forms. This is an excellent and fairly extensive (>500 m) example of a natural limestone cave.

Lesser Horseshoe Bats have been using the cave for many years - 50 hibernating bats were recorded in winter 1993/94. The numbers, however, vary with external temperature; during periods of sustained low temperatures, numbers in the cave may exceed 50 bats; when air temperature rises, numbers may drop to approximately 35 bats. As 50 bats have been recorded hibernating here, this is a site of international importance. Most of the bats hibernate within 20 m of the cave entrance. Ballymaglancy is the most suitable hibernation site for bats in the Cong district, as it offers a number of low, dry passageways near the cave entrance.

The cave is well-known and regularly visited, both by locals and caving groups. This may cause some disturbance to the hibernating bats and the site would benefit from grilling. Visitors may also cause degradation of delicate cave formations.