



Site Name: Clyard Kettle-holes SAC

Site Code: 000480

This site comprises a number of small lakes and turloughs developed between stony hillocks in the jumbled topography of the moraines west of Kilmaine, Co. Mayo. Some of these lakes are connected with each other but others appear to fill and empty by subterranean means. As is often the case with such features, apparently small physical differences have led to wide divergences in the development of vegetation in each basin.

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):

[3180] Turloughs* [7210] <i>Cladium</i> Fens*
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The main plant community in the kettle-holes at Clyard townland is *Cladium* fen, dominated by Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*), with Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) and Slender Sedge (*Carex lasiocarpa*). Clear shallow-water areas are filled by stoneworts (Characeae). Dense reedbeds are found in deeper waters, formed by Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*) and Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), with conspicuous tussocks of Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) and Tufted-sedge (*Carex elata*). A more species-rich community, formed largely of Tubular Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), occurs in quaking marsh areas. More eutrophic plants such as Nodding Bur-marigold (*Bidens cernua*), Branched Bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*), Fool's Water-cress (*Apium nodiflorum*) and Blue Water-speedwell (*Veronica anagallis-aquatica*) occur in these communities. Common marsh plants such as Square-stalked St. John's-wort (*Hypericum tetrapterum*), Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), sedges (*Carex nigra* and *C. rostrata*) and Grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*) are widely distributed, while Knotted Pearlwort (*Sagina nodosa*), Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*) and Marsh Lousewort (*Pedicularis palustris*) are especially associated with the fen.

To the north of Clyard, in Coolisduff townland, lies a turlough that floods in winter to an area of 12 ha. The basin is fringed by Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and the inundated vegetation receives a heavy coating of calcium carbonate. This turlough drains to a swallow hole in the north-west corner, with summer pools supporting stands of Great Fen-sedge. Another turlough lies just to the north, in Thomastown townland. The southern end of this turlough contains damp grassland vegetation, with Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and mosses such as *Calliergonella cuspidata*. The northern part is wetter, with Silverweed

(*Potentilla anserina*), and contains two pools. Two further turlough areas occur to the west, at Cahernagry East, which floods to an area of 12 ha, and at Caherhemush – Ballywalter, which floods to over 25 ha.

This series of turloughs are of interest for conservation as they support good examples of a habitat listed with priority status under the E.U. Habitats Directive. The occurrence of more permanent water bodies in the kettleholes adds considerable diversity to the site. The presence of *Cladium fen*, a habitat also listed with priority status under the E.U. Habitats Directive, is of particular conservation importance.