

Site Name: Doocastle Turlough SAC

Site Code: 000492

Doocastle turlough occurs on the county boundary between Mayo and Sligo, south-east of Tobercurry. Its basin is orientated along a north-west/south-east axis on gently undulating fluvioglacial deposits, with little exposed rock visible. The turlough is marl-free and in this regard resembles the nearby Turloughmore and Moylough, as well as Castleplunket and Carrowreagh in Roscommon.

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*

The wettest parts of the turlough are the ditches and two shallow ponds extending from them. Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*) occurs in the ditches, with Unbranched Bur-reed (*Sparganium emersum*), Branched Bur-reed (*S. erectum*), Water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*) and pondweeds (*Potamogeton natans*, *P. pusillus* and *P. crispus*). The pools contain Water-pepper (*Polygonum hydropiper*) and Small Water-pepper (*P. minus*), mixed with Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), Thread-leaved Water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus trichophyllus*), Lesser Marshwort (*Apium inundatum*) and Marsh Yellow-cress (*Rorippa palustris*). The uncommon Marsh Stitchwort (*Stellaria palustris*) grows adjacent to some of the ditches at the western end. A small intermittent stream flows into the turlough from the eastern end but in the summer the stream sinks and is no longer visible. There is no evidence of any external drainage, but additional seepage comes from a willow (*Salix* sp.) bed on the southern end of the basin.

The floor of the basin is generally covered in a wet sedge community, including Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), Common Sedge (*C. nigra*), Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*) and Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), with Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*) and Amphibious Bistort (*Polygonum amphibium*) in the wetter areas. The uncommon Fen Bedstraw (*Galium uliginosum*) also occurs here. East of the castle the vegetation is dominated by taller herbs such as Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Brown Sedge (*Carex disticha*) and Bottle Sedge (*C. rostrata*). The Summer Snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*) occurs as a few clumps on the floor of this basin but it has probably been introduced.

Doocastle contains small numbers of Whooper Swan and Golden Plover, species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Other migratory wildfowl and waders occur in quite high numbers for a relatively isolated turlough (numbers are

individuals recorded in 1993) - Wigeon (289), Teal (142), Curlew (92) and Lapwing (125).

In summary, this site is the best developed of the three most northerly turloughs in the country, with a good diversity of vegetation and several plants uncommon to the locality. There is some nutrient-poor fen with Fen Bedstraw, its only station in east Mayo. The turlough is relatively intact and no arterial or other drainage has been carried out. The site is also important for its bird populations.