

Site Name: Duvillaun Islands SAC

Site Code: 000495

The Duvillaun Islands comprise a group of marine islands, rocks and reefs 3 km off the southern tip of the Mullet Peninsula, Co. Mayo. The main islands included are Duvillaun More, Duvillaun Beg, Turduvillaun, Gaghta Island, Keely Island and Leamareha Island.

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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| [1349] Bottle-nosed Dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) [1364] Grey Seal (<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>) |
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The Duvillaun Islands form part of a larger group of islands, together with the Inishkeas, Inishkeeragh and Inishglora, which hold an important breeding population of Grey Seal. The breeding population is estimated at 648-833 individuals (in 2005).

Waters around the Duvillaun Islands support groups of Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) that are part of a population inhabiting the west and north coasts of Connacht and which numbers at least 177-337 dolphins. This species is also listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive. Group sizes of 2-20 individual dolphins, including calves, have been recorded around these islands. So far all dolphin records within the site have occurred in the month of April. Bottlenose Dolphin records from adjacent coastal waters of the Mullet Peninsula and Inishkea island group have occurred in all seasons.

The Duvillaun Islands are also of ornithological interest for their colonies of breeding seabirds and wintering geese. They hold the second largest colony of Great Black-backed Gull in Ireland (217 pairs during 1985-87). Other nationally important colonies include Cormorant (185 pairs), Shag (30-50 pairs), Fulmar (500 pairs), Common Gull (20-50 pairs) and Black Guillemot (80 individuals). Large numbers of Herring Gull are also found (300-400 pairs) (all figures are from 1981). Storm Petrel occur on Duvillaun More (14 colonies in 1966, total numbers are unknown, but probably at least 100 pairs).

The islands are also used as a wintering ground for internationally important numbers of Barnacle Goose (420-450 individuals in 1988), which interchange with the largest Irish population on the nearby Inishkea Islands.

Approximately two-thirds of Duvillaun More is covered by grass, and the island is grazed by sheep and rabbits. The other islands support little or no vegetation. The main threat to the Grey Seal population at this site is from illegal culling; nesting birds would be vulnerable to disturbance during breeding.