

**Site Name: Greaghans Turlough SAC**

**Site Code: 000503**

Greaghans Turlough is the most easterly of a group of five turloughs located near to Ballinrobe in Co. Mayo. It has a flattish, oval basin, which is deepest along the northern edge. For the most part it is surrounded by grazing land and is itself moderately grazed, least intensively at the eastern end. Two small clumps of trees occur on spurs on the northern edge. Two streams enter the turlough, one from the north-east which appears to be permanent, and one from the south which is ephemeral. A channel in the north-western corner may represent attempted drainage but it would appear to have had little overall effect on the hydrology of the site.

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*
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The vegetation in the turlough basin is clearly related to the contours, with Amphibious Bistort (*Polygonum amphibium*) occurring in most of the deepest parts, and Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*), Jointed Rush (*Juncus articulatus*) and Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) above this. At the edges, this grades into grassland, which is nutrient-enriched and species-poor at the western end but more species-rich to the east.

In places, the floor of the turlough is trampled where cattle gather. These areas support a vegetation community which is particularly rich in annual or short-lived perennial species such as Water-pepper (*Polygonum hydropiper*), Redshank (*Polygonum persicaria*), Common Chickweed (*Stellaria media*), Thread-leaved Water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus trichophyllus*), Marsh Foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*) and the rare, Red Data Book species, Northern Yellow-cress (*Rorippa islandica*).

Low, tree-covered spurs are found on the northern side of the turlough. Here Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*) occur, above a fringe of Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), through which grow Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*) and Creeping-Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*).

Greaghans Turlough is notable for its use in winter by swans - 40 Whooper Swan, a species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, were recorded in 1986 on the site.

Greaghans Turlough is somewhat uniform because of its topography, but is valuable as an undrained turlough with a variety of well-developed vegetation communities. The site is notable for the occurrence of a large area of vegetation dominated by annual plant species. Turloughs are rare and threatened habitats that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive and, as such, are of conservation significance. The presence of the rare Northern Yellow-cress and of a large flock of wintering Whooper Swan add significantly to the importance of the site.