



**Site Name: Charleville Wood SAC**

**Site Code: 000571**

Charleville Wood is a large woodland surrounded by estate parkland and agricultural grassland located about 3 km south-west of Tullamore in Co. Offaly. The site, which is underlain by deep glacial deposits, includes a small lake with a wooded island, and a stream runs along the western perimeter. The woodland is one of very few ancient woodlands remaining in Ireland, with some parts undisturbed for at least 200 years.

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):

[91E0] Alluvial Forests\*  
[1016] Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*)

At Charleville Wood, approximately 10% of the woodland has been under-planted with conifers and other exotic trees, but the majority is dominated by Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*). There is much Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and scattered Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*), while birch (*Betula* spp.) is a feature of the boggy margins. The shrub layer is composed largely of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*). The ground layer is varied, including damp flushed slopes with Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*) and drier, more open areas with a moss sward composed largely of *Rhytidiadelphus triquetris*. The fungal flora of the woodland is notable for the presence of several rare Myxomycete species, namely *Hemitrichia calyculata*, *Perichaena depressa*, *Amaurochaete atra*, *Collaria arcyronema*, *Stemonitis nigrescens* and *Diderma deplanata*.

Wet alluvial forest is found around the lake. It is dominated by Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*) with Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Ash. The ground flora is dominated by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) with Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), sedges (*Carex* spp.), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*) and Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) present.

Extensive swamps of Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*) and Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) have developed in the lake shallows. The wooded island at its centre is famed for its long history of non-disturbance. Hazel, Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*) and Ivy (*Hedera helix*) reach remarkable sizes here.

The lake is an important wildfowl habitat - it supports populations of Mute and Whooper Swan and a number of duck species, including Teal, Wigeon, Shoveler, Pochard and Tufted Duck.

A number of unusual insects have been recorded in Charleville Wood, notably *Mycetobia obscura* (Order Diptera), a species known from only one other site in Ireland. The site is also notable for the presence of a large population of the rare snail species, *Vertigo moulinsiana*.

Charleville Wood is one of the most important ancient woodland sites in Ireland. The woodland has a varied age structure and is relatively intact with areas of both closed and open canopy. The understorey and ground layers are also well-represented. Alluvial forest is a priority habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, while the rare snail species, *Vertigo moulinsiana*, is listed on Annex II of this Directive. The wetland areas, with their associated bird populations, rare insect and Myxomycete species, contribute further to the conservation significance of the site.