

Site Name: Charleville Wood SAC

Site Code: 000571

Charleville Wood is a large Oak 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 considered to be 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):

[91A0] Old Oak Woodlands [1016] Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>)

At Charleville Wood, approximately 10% of the woodland has been under-planted with conifers and other exotic trees, but the rest of the area is dominated by Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*). Apart from Oak, 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 arcyryonema*, *Stemonitis nigrescens* and *Diderma deplanata*.

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, with regenerating saplings present in the latter. The understorey and ground layers are also well-represented. Old oak woodland is a 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.