



Site Name: Fin Lough (Offaly) SAC

Site Code: 000576

Fin Lough is a shallow limestone lake surrounded by a complex of wetland habitats, 7 km north-east of Shannonbridge in Co. Offaly. The name Fionn Loch, "White Lake", probably derives from the white colour of the lake bottom caused by marl deposits. It is a shallow lake, about 16 ha in extent (in winter) and bounded to the north and east by the Clonfinlough esker ridge, and to the south and west by Blackwater Bog, which is now largely cut-over. The lake and its surrounding wetland communities are arranged in distinct zones reflecting wetness and substrate. They include open water, reedswamp, tall sedge, alkaline fen, fen-bog transition, swamp woodland and bog. The transition from calcium-rich lake to reedbed, to fen, to bog is relatively intact in some areas, which is exceptional for this part of the country.

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):

[7230] Alkaline Fens [1013] Geyer's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>)
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The alkaline fen is species-rich, with characteristic plants including Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) and the sedge species, *Carex flacca*, *C. lepidocarpa* and *C. panicea*. The total flora of the Fin Lough wetland is remarkably rich: 210 species of vascular plants and 29 species of bryophytes have been identified to date.

In addition, the site supports an extensive invertebrate fauna and is nationally important for two rare Hover-fly species (Order Diptera), *Chrysogaster macquarti* and *Platycheirus perpallidus*. The presence of the rare snail, *Vertigo geyeri*, a species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, is of considerable conservation significance. As one of the few areas of standing water in Co. Offaly, the lake is also an important roosting area for winter bird visitors such as Mallard, Teal and Tufted Duck.

Drainage works to facilitate peat milling activities adjoining the site have reduced the extent of open water in the site, and large areas of the former lake basin are now overgrown by reedswamp and scrub woodland. Fin Lough remains an important site, however, because of the diversity of wetland habitats and species that it supports.