

**Site Name: Nier Valley Woodlands SAC**

**Site Code: 000668**

Nier Valley Woodlands comprises an area of mixed semi-natural deciduous forest lying on the flanks of the Nier Valley, 3 km east of Ballymacarbry in Co. Waterford. It consists of several separate tracts of woodland which were once joined up but have now been fragmented by afforestation and housing developments. One large tract occupies the flanks along the north side of the Nier Valley extending up the Glennanore River. The second large area extends over 3 km along the southern banks of the River Nier. A third area is situated just south of the river to the east of Ballymacarbry Bridge.

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
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These woodlands form the largest tract of deciduous woodland in this area and support an excellent diversity of flora and fauna. They contain a good variety of native trees, including birch (*Betula* spp.) and oak (*Quercus* spp.) with some Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and some introduced conifer species. There is also a good transition of vegetation from Hazel-dominated scrub at the valley base to relatively pure Oak woodland near the summit.

There is little natural tree regeneration in this woodland as a result of fairly intensive grazing by livestock and deer, and the ground flora is limited. However, species such as Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*) and Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) occur commonly. Within the UK and Ireland, Irish Spurge (*Euphorbia hyberna*) is largely limited to the south-west of Ireland, and thus its occurrence is of note. The bryophyte flora is well developed and many of the mature trees are rich in epiphytes. The rare Myxomycete fungus *Licea minim* has been recorded from these woodlands. Areas of heath, wet grassland and dry grassland also occur within the site.

Two Red Data Book vertebrates - Badger (*Meles meles*) and Natterer's Bat (*Myotis nattereri*) - are present in the woodlands. Other animal species recorded from the site include Fallow Deer (*Dama dama*), Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*), Stoat (*Mustela erminea*), Long-Eared Owl, Woodcock and Pheasant.

Threats to the woodland on the site include clear-felling, invasion by Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*), livestock grazing and further housing and other developments. This site is of considerable conservation importance because of the presence of old oak woodland. It is of additional ecological and educational interest as it contains areas that show the stages of development from open heath to mature Oak woodland.