



**Site Name: Knocksink Wood SAC**

**Site Code: 000725**

Knocksink Wood is situated in the valley of the Glencullen River, just north-west of Enniskerry in Co. Wicklow. The fast flowing Glencullen River winds its way over granite boulders along the valley floor. The steep sides of the valley are mostly covered with calcareous drift, and support extensive areas of woodland.

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):

[7220] Petrifying Springs*
[91A0] Old Oak Woodlands
[91E0] Alluvial Forests*

The south-western end of Knocksink Wood comprises oak woodland which is dominated by Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) with a sparse shrub layer of Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*). In many areas the ground layer consists of a carpet of Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*). Other areas are characterised by mixed woodland, with Sessile Oak, Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and occasional conifers. The ground flora includes Ivy (*Hedera helix*) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), and often luxuriant ferns, including Hart's-tongue (*Phyllitis scolopendrium*), Soft Shield-fern (*Polystichium setiferum*), and mosses. Lichens occur abundantly on some trees.

A notable feature of the wooded slopes are the frequent and extensive springs and seepage areas, and there is tufa formation in several places. Bryophytes are abundant in some areas, and species include *Cratoneuron filicinum*, *Palustriella commutata*, *P. falcata* and *Leiocolea turbinata*. Associated vascular plant species include Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*), Water-cress (*Nasturtium officinale*) and Great Horsetail (*Equisetum telmateia*).

Associated with the springs and the river are stands of wet alluvial forest. These areas are dominated by Ash and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), and are assigned to the group Carici remotae-Fraxinetum. Other species which occur include willows (*Salix* spp.), Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) and Hazel.

Islands in the river and open gravelly areas provide further habitat diversity in this site.

A number of scarce or rare plants occur within the site including Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acer*), Ivy-leaved Bellflower (*Wahlenbergia hederacea*) and Yellow Archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*).

This site contains a substantial area of potentially ancient woodland. It has one of the most diverse woodland invertebrate faunas in Ireland, including some wet woodland organisms which are threatened at an international level. Vertebrates noted in the vicinity, either by tracks, sett or sight, include Red Squirrel, Badger, Rabbit and Deer. The woodland supports large populations of birds, including many common passerines (Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Wren, Chaffinch) and crows, such as Rook, Hooded Crow, Magpie, Jackdaw and Raven. Buzzard have been recorded in the area and Dipper are occasionally seen on the river.

The importance of this site lies in the diversity of woodland habitats which occur. Three habitats listed in Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, two of which have priority status (petrifying springs and alluvial woodland), occur at this site. The presence of rare or threatened plants and invertebrates adds to the interest. Much of this site has been designated a Statutory Nature.