

## SITE SYNOPSIS

### SITE NAME: LOUGH KINALE AND DERRAGH LOUGHS

### SITE CODE: 000985

Lough Kinale, intersecting counties Longford, Cavan and Westmeath, is dwarfed by Lough Sheelin, the eighth largest of the Republic of Ireland's lakes, which lies about 1 km to the northeast. However with 250 ha of open water area, Lough Kinale should not be described as a small lake. Kinale has 2 main basins, almost separated by swamp formations. Derragh Lough is a smaller (35 ha) companion Lough to the southeast. The lakes lie in a limestone trough.

The main input of water into Lough Kinale is from Lough Sheelin via the River Inny. An An Foras Forbartha report from 1972 states that Lough Sheelin had become polluted by nutrient enrichment, and was characterized by blooms of blue-green algae. The same blue green algal blooms also characterised Lough Kinale. Environmental Research Unit data, published in 1990 indicate that by 1982 Sheelin was grossly polluted (hypertrophic) but had since recovered to a state (mesotrophic) that must be approaching its former water quality status. It seems likely that Lough Kinale has also recovered some of its former water quality. The residence time of water in both lakes is comparatively low, in the order of 6 months, and so water quality is likely to show dramatic response to changes in nutrient input levels.

The plant communities around the lake are of interest. The largest area is covered by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Tufted-sedge (*Carex elata*) Swamps and marshes, behind which there is often a calcium rich small sedge marsh, characterised by species such as Long-stalked Yellow-sedge (*Carex lepidocarpa*), Marsh Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*) and Knotted Pearlwort (*Sagina nodosa*) which are restricted to such habitats, together with wetland species which are less dependant upon calcium status, such as Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and Red Rattle (*Pedicularis palustris*). There are peatland areas adjacent to 2 sides of Lough Kinale, one bog area separating it from Derragh Lough. These areas have suffered from the establishment of conifer plantations, which not only damages the area they occupy, but introduces fertilisers, and silt into the water on establishment, and discharges collected pollutants once established.

The value of Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough for wildfowl is evident, with reliable, nationally important numbers of Mute Swan (av. max. 100), Pochard (av. max. 301) and Tufted Duck (av. max. 288) recorded in the mid 1980. There are also important numbers of Great Crested Grebe, Whooper Swan, Wigeon, Teal, Goldeneye, Coot, Golden Plover, Lapwing and Curlew. The adjacent wetlands and peatland are of particular importance for the last 3 species.

Although the interchange of birds between sites is not properly understood, it is clear that this area is an important refuge for birds disturbed from other sites. It has been known to carry very large numbers of birds in the past, for example in 1975 a raft of 2400 Coot was counted, and in 1969, 2,160 Tufted Duck and 2,425 Pochard were recorded in January.

Birds using Kinale and Derragh are also subject to disturbance - the lakes are intensively shot over from September to January, and although the famous trout fishery has declined through water pollution, angling for coarse fish from boats continues throughout the year. These activities must cause some disturbance to waterbirds in the winter months, and make feeding areas unavailable.

Shooting pressure on State-owned Lough Kinale is regulated by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. It may be necessary to adopt stricter control/regulation on shooting pressure.

12 July, 1995.

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