

Site Name: Aughrusbeg Machair and Lake SAC

Site Code: 001228

Aughrusbeg Machair and Lake is located about 2 km west of Cleggan, Co. Galway. It is a large coastal site with a diversity of habitats, including machair and a nutrient-poor lake. Omev granite is the main bedrock in the area.

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):

[3110] Oligotrophic Waters containing very few minerals [4010] Wet Heath

Species recorded from the lake margins at this site include Six-stamened Waterwort (*Elatine hexandra*), Quillwort (*Isoetes lacustris*) and Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*). Much of the lake has sloping granite shores - only at the western end is there a well developed sand shelf. At the edge of the sand shelf the lake bed falls steeply to 6 m. Here a community of Spiked Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) and Fennel Pondweed (*Potamogeton pectinatus*) occurs. The lake bottom has a good covering of stoneworts, with large stands of *Nitella translucens*, interspersed by *N. batrachosperma*, *Chara delicatula* var. *bulbifera*, *C. muscosa* and Small Pondweed (*Potamogeton berchtoldii*). Algal balls (*Cladophora aegagropilia*) are found in the deeper parts of the lake.

Surrounding the lake on its northern, southern and eastern sides are areas of good quality wet heath, intermixed with areas of dry heath associated with rock outcrops. The dry heath includes such species as Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Sheep's-bit (*Jasione montana*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Mouse-ear Hawkweed (*Hieracium pilosella*), Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) and Heath-grass (*Danthonia decumbens*). Dry heath also occurs in some coastal parts of the site.

An area of machair separates the lake from the sea. This species-rich grassland is dominated by Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Buck's-horn Plantain (*P. coronopus*) and Wild Thyme (*Thymus praecox*). There are also some small flushed areas dominated by Jointed Rush (*Juncus articulatus*), with the mosses *Drepanocladus revolvens* and *Campylium stellatum*. The machair is heavily grazed by cattle and rabbits, and this has led to erosion in places.

Saltmarsh vegetation occurs in association with the large sea inlet at Aughrus Beg, where species including Sea Arrowgrass (*Triglochin maritima*), Common Scurvygrass

(*Cochlearia officinalis*), Sea Plantain (*P. maritima*), Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*) and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*) are common. Here saltmarsh communities merge inland with dry heath vegetation on the higher ground.

Other habitats present within the site include rocky shore, sandy beach, shingle beach, intertidal sandflats and open marine areas.

The lake contains an introduced population of Roach (*Rutilus rutilus*).

For its relatively small area, Aghrusbeg Machair and Lake has a high level of habitat diversity and is of significant conservation value, in particular for its good examples of lowland oligotrophic lake and wet heath, both habitats which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.