



Site Name: Ross Lake and Woods SAC

Site Code: 001312

Ross Lake and Woods is located approximately 4 km north-west of Moycullen on the west side of Lough Corrib in Co. Galway. The area is underlain by limestone.

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):

[3140] Hard Water Lakes

[1303] Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)

The main habitat on the site is a medium-sized lake, Ross Lake, which has a limestone bed covered by deposits of precipitated marl and a shoreline of marl-encrusted limestone boulders. It is a good example of a hard water lake, and supports beds of stoneworts, including *Chara globularis* var. *virgata*, *C. pedunculata* and *C. curta*. The last two species in particular are characteristic of marl lakes. The open water also supports Yellow Water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*) and Broad-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*).

Most of the shoreline is fringed by wetland vegetation of reedswamp, freshwater marsh, fen, wet woodland and wet grassland. Reedswamp vegetation is dominated by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*), with Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) also occurring. The rocky limestone shore mostly supports fen-type vegetation characterised by Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*). This grades into areas of wet grassland dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and species-rich marsh, characterised by species such as Slender Sedge (*Carex lasiocarpa*), Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*) and Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*). Also found around the lake edge is well-developed wet woodland, with Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and willows (*Salix* spp.) occurring commonly, accompanied by Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), Buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*), Guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*) and Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*).

A small lake, Lough Parkyflaherty, is separated from the main lake by an overgrown railway embankment.

The site contains a large block of coniferous plantation, consisting largely of spruce (*Picea* sp.) and larch (*Larix* sp.) species, on the site of a former mixed-deciduous woodland, Annagh Wood. There are also areas of broadleaved woodland and scrub, dominated variously by Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) or Hazel (*Corylus avellana*).

A breeding colony (not less than 155 individuals counted in 1994) of Lesser Horseshoe Bat occurs in an out-building beside Ross House. This species is threatened within the EU and the population at this site is rated of international importance. The woodlands and lakeside vegetation on the site provide foraging habitat within a small radius of the roost site. The woodlands in particular are very important to this species in providing shelter to reach foraging habitats and seasonal roosts as it does not fly across open areas.

The presence on the site of Otter, a species also listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, and of a small colony of Common Gull (10 individuals breeding in 1992) is notable.

The main land uses within the site are angling, commercial forestry, and grazing of the woodland and wetland areas.

The site is of importance because it contains a good example of a hard water lake, a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, and for the internationally important population of Lesser Horseshoe Bat, a species listed on Annex II of this Directive, which occurs. The presence of Otter and breeding Common Gull is also of note.