

**Site Name: Ballynafagh Lake SAC**

**Site Code: 001387**

Ballynafagh Lake is located about 2 km north-west of Prosperous in Co. Kildare. It is a shallow alkaline lake with some emergent vegetation. The Blackwood Feeder, which connects Ballynafagh Lake to the Grand Canal, is also included in the site.

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):

[7230] Alkaline Fens [1016] Desmoulin's Whorl Snail ( <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> ) [1065] Marsh Fritillary ( <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> )
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Ballynafagh Lake is a shallow alkaline lake with patches of emergent vegetation in the middle, as well as around the shore. Submerged plants include starworts (*Callitriche* spp.) and Lesser Bladderwort (*Utricularia minor*), with Common Duckweed (*Lemna minor*) and the liverwort *Riccocarpus natans* occurring on the surface.

Alkaline fen vegetation occurs at the lake edge, including a plant community dominated by Blunt-flowered Rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*) and Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), and with frequent sedges (e.g. *Carex lepidocarpa* and *C. rostrata*). Other species in this area include Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Marsh Lousewort (*Pedicularis palustris*), Marsh Arrowgrass (*Triglochin palustris*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*). Extensive stands of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Bulrush and Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) occur around the open water. A stand of Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) occurs in the western corner.

The lake is surrounded by acid grassland, heath and bog. Here the vegetation includes Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). Wet woodland of birch (*Betula* spp.), willow (*Salix* spp.) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) occurs in the north-west corner of the lake.

The Blackwood Feeder connects Ballynafagh Lake to the Grand Canal and is of particular conservation significance for the populations of two rare snail species, *Vertigo moulinsiana* and *Pisidium pseudosphaerium*, that it supports. The former species is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, while the latter has previously been recorded only from sites along the Royal Canal. *Vertigo moulinsiana* also occurs

in wetland vegetation by Ballynafagh Lake itself. A high diversity of molluscan species is found on the site (42 species recorded in 1997).

A wide diversity of insects is also found at Ballynafagh Lake, including the Marsh Fritillary butterfly, a species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

Breeding birds of the lake include Little Grebe, Mallard, Moorhen, Coot, Snipe and Water Rail. In May 1993 a pair of Curlew was observed holding territory. Sedge Warbler, Reed Bunting and Whitethroat breed within the site. Black-headed Gulls formerly bred at the lake but only single birds were observed in 1993. Wintering waterfowl include: Whooper Swan 20, Teal 114, Mallard 110, Golden Plover 40 and Curlew 117 (all counts average peaks, 1 season 1984/85 - 86/87).

The main land use at the site is fishing in the lake. There is a 'No Shooting Area' Order on the site.

Although originally a reservoir, Ballynafagh Lake has developed a very natural vegetation with some interesting plant communities, including alkaline fen, a habitat that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site supports a high diversity of molluscan species, with some rare species recorded, including *Vertigo moulinsiana*, a species that is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site is also of ornithological importance.