



**Site Name: Doogort Machair/Lough Doo SAC**

**Site Code: 001497**

Doogort Machair/Lough Doo SAC is a small coastal site lying in the north-east corner of Achill Island, Co. Mayo, adjacent to the village of Valley and approximately 3 km east of Doogort. Most of this site consists of machair (i.e. coastal grassland on a sandy substrate), which fronts onto the shoreline.

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):

[21A0] Machairs* [1395] Petalwort ( <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> )
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The machair at this site occurs on two plains separated by an escarpment. One consists of a low, wet, hummocky plain near the sea, while the second is higher, drier, and flatter, and found further inland. This second plain grades into bog. The machair sward is generally close-cropped and includes species such as Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*) and small sedges (e.g. *Carex panicea* and *C. nigra*), as well as Sand Sedge (*C. arenaria*). There is frequently a carpet of mosses and liverworts covering the sand surface, and a number of rare and scarce species occur, including *Campylopus subulatus*, *Amblyodon dealbatus*, *Haplomitrium hookeri* and *Mastigophora woodsii*.

Two small lakes lie at the back of the machair. Lough Doo is bordered at its western end by a freshwater marsh with Fool's Water-cress (*Apium nodiflorum*) and Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*). Lough Nambrack, to the south, is partially fringed by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), with occasional Branched Bur-reed (*Spartanium erectum*) and Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*). At its western end is a small, species-rich marsh with Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*) and Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*). Around these lakes, as on the machair, there is a good moss and liverwort flora which includes some scarce and rare species, e.g. *Catoscopium nigritum* and *Fossombronina incurva*. The liverwort *Leiocolea gillmannii* has been recently recorded here - this is the only Irish station for this species.

Along the seaward fringe of the site are a range of shoreline habitats including sandy beach, shingle beach, boulder beach and exposed bedrock. Fucoids and green algae colonise the lower shore. In places, the shore is backed by low sea-cliffs (approximately 3 m high), which are formed of soft deposits of clay, and occasionally peat.

As well as the interesting moss and liverwort species already mentioned, Petalwort (*Petalophyllum ralfsii*), a rare species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, has also been recorded at this site.

The site supports several species of breeding waders, with Lapwing (7 pairs), Dunlin (2 pairs) and Ringed Plover (1 pair) recorded in 1996. The occurrence of Dunlin is of particular note as it is a rare Irish breeding bird and is listed as a Red Data Book species. Unfortunately numbers have declined since 1985 when 10 pairs were recorded at the site.

The machair at Doogort is a largely unenclosed commonage used for grazing sheep and cattle. The correct level of grazing, evenly spread over the site, is a critical factor in maintaining species diversity and habitat quality of machair. A major threat to machair is agricultural improvement. Application of fertilisers can result in the loss of semi-natural vegetation and a reduction in species-richness. Run-off of fertiliser can also cause pollution of associated freshwater systems.

This scenic coastal site contains a good diversity of habitats in a small area. The machair here is a good example of a habitat type which is increasingly rare and receives priority status under Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. An outstanding feature of this site is its moss and liverwort flora, which includes a number of rarities, including an Annex II species. A number of oceanic species occur here which are rare in a European context.