

Site Name: Annaghmore Lough (Roscommon) SAC

Site Code: 001626

Annaghmore Lough is located 5 km north-west of Strokestown, Co. Roscommon. It lies at the centre of a network of small lakes in a rolling, drift-covered landscape. The shoreline slopes gently to the lake and these low-lying margins are extensively flooded in winter. In summer, when water levels recede, substantial areas of this shallow calcareous lake dry out, leaving flat expanses of exposed marl. A smaller, less calcareous lake occurs to the south of 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 [1013] Geyer's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>)
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The main lake at this site is surrounded by Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*) backed by reedbeds of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*). Extensive areas of alkaline fen, dominated by Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) occur around the shoreline. Damp calcareous grassland, subject to winter flooding, also occurs in association with the fen. Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) is extremely abundant in this species-rich grassland, together with Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*), Carnation Sedge (*C. panicea*), Glaucous Sedge (*C. flacca*), Tawny Sedge (*C. hostiana*), Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus uliginosus*) and Few-flowered Spike-rush (*Eleocharis quinqueflora*). Several orchid species are found, including Early Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*) and Fragrant Orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*). A number of uncommon plants are found in the wet calcareous fen and surrounding grasslands. These include Broad-leaved Cottongrass (*Eriophorum latifolium*), Marsh Helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), Marsh Hawk's-beard (*Crepis paludosa*), Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) and Fly Orchid (*O. insectifera*). The fen also hosts two rare moss species, *Bryum neodamense* and *B. uliginosum*, although the latter has not been seen at the site for several years.

A small area of limestone pavement with abundant White Stonecrop (*Sedum album*) and an old cutover bog add diversity to the site.

Two populations of the rare whorl snail *Vertigo geyeri* are found in association with Black Bog-rush in the alkaline fen on the northern shore of Annaghmore Lough. This species is rare in Europe and listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

The site is important for wintering birds and is listed as a wildfowl sanctuary, with nationally important numbers of Teal (545) and Shoveler (55) (counts are average peaks for period 1998/99 – 2002/03). A good diversity of other species occur in local or regional concentrations, including Wigeon (402), Mallard (183), Pochard (28), Goldeneye (22), Lapwing (297) and Curlew (84). Of particular note is the occurrence, albeit in small numbers, of two species which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, Whooper Swan (7) and Golden Plover (264).

This site is relatively intact with only minor damage caused by cattle poaching and some burning on the fen. Some infilling of wetland vegetation has occurred between the northern shore of the lake and the nearby road. Drainage is a potential threat to the site and associated floodlands.

This is a site of considerable conservation importance as it contains a range of uncommon plant species, supports significant bird numbers, and contains a good example of alkaline fen vegetation. It is also particularly noteworthy because it supports a population of the rare snail *Vertigo geyeri*.