



Site Name: Four Roads Turlough SAC

Site Code: 001637

Four Roads Turlough is located south-west of Four Roads village, 2.5 km from the River Suck, in Co. Roscommon. It lies below a low scarp of limestone hills and is an open, shallow basin without permanent standing water which seems to flood predictably and dry out early.

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):

[3180] Turloughs*

The turlough has a relatively uniform vegetation structure, with the eastern part predominantly of grass, mostly Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), and the western part consisting mainly of sedges, with Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*) most frequent. There are a few low-lying places where Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) grow, and a few pools with Thread-leaved Water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus trichophyllus*), Lesser Water-plantain (*Baldellia ranunculoides*) and Lesser Marshwort (*Apium inundatum*). No oligotrophic fen vegetation occurs and only a few tufts of Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) are found. The soil is peaty, and there are occasional tree stumps.

Four Roads Turlough has long been recognised as an area of ornithological importance for the large numbers of waterfowl that use it in winter, and it is part of a Wildfowl Sanctuary. As with most turloughs, bird numbers are highly variable. There are times when the whole of the River Suck population of Greenland White-fronted Goose (500) use the site, along with 2,600 wildfowl and 8,000 waders. At other times bird numbers are as low as several hundred. Except where indicated, the following numbers are the average of 11 counts over 3 seasons, 1984/85-1986/87: Wigeon (983), Teal (870), Shoveler (81), Bewick's Swan (21), Greenland White-fronted Goose (177, one count in 1987/88), Mallard (235), Pintail (40), Golden Plover (317), Lapwing (473) and Curlew (103). A single count on January 17 1988 emphasises the importance of assessing bird populations of turloughs based on as large a series of counts as possible - present on that date were 3,600 Wigeon, 2,500 Teal, 177 Greenland White-fronted Goose and 2,900 Lapwing. The site is also used by Whooper Swan (recent count of 60) and breeding Lapwing, Redshank and Snipe. Several of these species are listed in the Red Data Book and on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

The site is undrained, in spite of a few past attempts around the margins, and is fertilized in the eastern half. It is intensively grazed and in some areas there is poaching of the peaty soil.

This turlough has a relatively uniform vegetation, but does still support some interesting species (e.g. Lesser Water-plantain). Turloughs are listed with priority status on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive and, as such, are of considerable conservation significance. The site is very important as a refuge or feeding area for wildfowl and waders, some of which occur in numbers of national importance.