

Site Name: Lough Arrow SAC

Site Code: 001673

Lough Arrow, located in Counties Sligo and Roscommon, is a large limestone lake that conforms to a type listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The lake is sheltered on three sides by hills and is the source of the Unshin River. Lough Arrow is unusual in being a mesotrophic natural lake which has changed little in the last 40 years. It is largely spring-fed and very sheltered for its size, and, as such, is hydrologically different from most other lakes.

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

The shores of Lough Arrow are for the most part stony. Several bays occur in which Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*) and Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) are found in abundance. In places the reedbeds extend out into the lake and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) also occur. The lakeshore vegetation, which includes sedges (*Carex* spp.), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*), grades into areas of mossy boulders and woodland. The lakes support a diverse submerged aquatic flora.

An area of wet woodland in the north-west of the site is dominated by willows (*Salix* spp.) and some Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) occurs also. The ground flora is composed of Yellow Iris, Common Reed, rushes (*Juncus* spp.), Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), sedges and Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*).

Areas of dry woodland to the north and south of the lake are also included in the site. The dominant species here are Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). The ground flora includes Herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*), Cleavers (*Galium aparine*), Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), and a variety of fern, moss and liverwort species.

The wooded islands and some areas along the shore are used by nesting Tufted Duck, while the reedbeds are also used by nesting wildfowl. In winter the lake is frequented by flocks of Tufted Duck (226), Coot (325), Little Grebe (35), Wigeon (87), Mallard (27), Pochard (36) and Goldeneye (49) (data for 2 counts over 1 season, 1984/85 - 1986/87). Lough Arrow supports the highest density of breeding Great

Crested Grebe, Merganser and Tufted Duck of any of the large lakes in western Ireland.

The lake is notable for its Brown Trout and Eel populations, both of which are fished. Otter, a Red Data Book species which is legally protected under the Wildlife Act, 1976, and is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, has been recorded at the site.

Lough Arrow and its environs incorporate a variety of habitats, including the E.U. Habitats Directive Annex I listed habitat, hard water lake. The site also supports important numbers of birds. The diversity of lakeshore vegetation and the presence of protected species, in particular Otter, adds to the conservation significance of the site.