



Site Name: Streedagh Point Dunes SAC

Site Code: 001680

Streedagh Point Dunes SAC is a sand dune and estuary system, and lies approximately 4 km west of Grange, a small village about 16 km north of Sligo town. The site consists of a tombolo formation, with a shingle spit overlain by sand dunes joining Conors Island to Streedagh Point. The landward side of the site comprises an area of sand flats, the estuary of the River Grange. The underlying bedrock is of stratified sedimentary rocks - argillaceous and oolitic limestones, conglomerates and chert; some strata are rich in fossils.

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):

- [1140] Tidal Mudflats and Sandflats
- [1220] Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks
- [1330] Atlantic Salt Meadows
- [1410] Mediterranean Salt Meadows
- [2120] Marram Dunes (White Dunes)
- [2130] Fixed Dunes (Grey Dunes)*

- [1014] Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail (*Vertigo angustior*)

Sand dunes extend along the length of the spit and cover the southern half of Conors Island. A boulder beach extends along the entire seaward side of the system. The dunes are accreting on the landward side and eroding on the northern, seaward side.

The embryo dunes are colonised primarily by Sea Sandwort (*Honkenya peploides*), Sea Campion (*Silene vulgaris* subsp. *maritima*) and small amounts of Sand Couch (*Elymus farctus*). At this site this habitat occurs in association with, and grades into, perennial vegetation of stony banks. A ridge of shifting marram dunes occurs along the entire length of the dune system. These are dominated by Marram (*Ammophila arenaria*), but include Colt's-foot (*Tussilago farfara*), clovers (*Trifolium* spp.), Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) and Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*).

The fixed dunes, which are a priority habitat on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, are well-developed. They contain some large sand hills and dune slacks, and are rich in plant species, particularly small herbs. Plant species occurring include Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Wild Pansy (*Viola tricolor* subsp. *curtisii*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Bulbous Buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*), Field Wood-rush (*Luzula*

campestris), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), Wild Thyme (*Thymus praecox*), Biting Stonecrop (*Sedum acre*), Common Cornsalad (*Valerianella locusta*), Rue-leaved Saxifrage (*Saxifraga tridactylites*), Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) and Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*). The dune slacks are rich in sedges (*Carex* spp.), with rushes (*Juncus* spp.) and Variegated Horsetail (*Equisetum variegatum*) also found.

The estuary of the River Grange consists of intertidal sandflats with areas of saltmarsh around the margins. The area of intertidal flats is fairly extensive, and extends for approximately 4 km. Saltmarsh on the site supports Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Lax-flavoured Sea-lavender (*Limonium humile*), Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*), Common Scurvygrass (*Cochlearia officinalis*), glassworts (*Salicornia* spp.) and turf fucoids (dwarfed seaweeds). Both Atlantic and Mediterranean types of saltmarsh are well-represented at the site.

The rare snail, *Vertigo angustior*, a species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, has recently been recorded from sand dunes on the site. Common Seals haul out on sand banks in the site and Grey Seals have also been noted in the area. The locally-occurring butterfly, Dingy Skipper, has also been recorded on the site.

The estuary is used by moderate numbers of wintering waterfowl (all figures are average maximum counts for 1995/96 - 1998/99): Ringed Plover (14), Grey Plover (41), Brent Goose (30), Oystercatcher (113), Dunlin (298), Curlew (43) and Redshank (48). The site is also used by Terns and Chough, although these species do not nest here.

The main land uses within the site are sheep grazing and recreation, both of which have led to some erosion in the dunes, although in places grazing has maintained a short sward used by geese and Choughs for feeding.

The site contains a diversity of habitats and supports a wide range of vegetation communities and plant species. Six habitats found on the site are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The presence of fixed dunes, a habitat given priority status on this Annex, is of particular note. The site is also important for the presence of the rare snail, *Vertigo angustior*. The presence of wintering waterfowl adds to the significance of this site and the geological interest of Streedagh Point enhances its overall importance.