

Site Name: Kilmuckridge-Tinnaberna Sandhills SAC

Site Code: 001741

Kilmuckridge-Tinnaberna Sandhills SAC is a narrow coastal site which extends for almost 4 km along the Wexford coastline, from 3 km east of Kilmuckridge in the north to Ballynamona in the south.

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):

[2110] Embryonic shifting dunes
[2120] Marram Dunes (White Dunes)
[2130] Fixed Dunes (Grey Dunes)*

The site is comprised of a fine-grained sandy beach up to 50 m wide, backed by steep clay cliffs at the southern end and sand dunes at the northern end. The cliffs are up to 15 m high, and are eroding in places. They support a patchy vegetation that includes Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*). Embryonic dunes are well developed along the length of this stretch of coast, particularly in the area around the townland of Ballyduboy. This represents one of the few actively accreting shorelines along the east coast.

North of Tinnaberna, the cliffs are replaced by gently undulating sand dunes. These are up to 150 m wide and have a species-rich flora typical of fixed dunes. Marram (*Ammophila arenaria*) is abundant, particularly on the fore dunes. Other species found on the dunes include Sheep's-bit (*Jasione montana*), Wild Pansy (*Viola tricolor*), Sand Sedge (*Carex arenaria*), Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil, Common Restharrow (*Ononis repens*) and Yellow-wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*).

Further inland the low sand ridges have a luxuriant growth of mosses and lichens, most notably Dog Lichen (*Peltigera canina*) and the fern *Polypodium vulgare*. A dense scrub of Sea Buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) has encroached onto the fixed dune area - the spread of this invasive, introduced species needs to be monitored and controlled. Northwards, the sand dunes are relatively undisturbed and free of Sea Buckthorn, but lack the diversity of higher plant species and abundance of lower plants found on the dunes in the south.

Two streams meander across the site at the northern end and flow into the sea. They are fringed by small areas of wet woodland, with Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Rusty Willow (*Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*) being the main tree species. The ground flora

includes Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*), Hemlock Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*), Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*).

The scarce Night-flowering Catchfly (*Silene noctiflora*), which is mainly found in the south-east of Ireland, occurs on cliffs in the site. Moore's Horsetail (*Equisetum x moorei*), a rare hybrid which is confined to the coasts of Wicklow and Wexford, is also found here. This species is legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999. There is an old record from the site for the Red Data Book species, Sea Stock (*Matthiola sinuata*); this species has not, however, been seen recently at this or any other site in Ireland and is thought to be extinct.

The site contains a good diversity of coastal habitats and plant species and, apart from the presence of Sea Buckthorn, it is presently relatively undisturbed. It is of particular conservation significance for its Embryonic dunes, Marram dunes and Fixed dunes, all habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The presence of several scarce plants adds to the importance of the site.