

Site Name: Ballyseedy Wood SAC

Site Code: 002112

Ballyseedy Wood lies south of the River Lee, some 2 km south-east of Tralee, Co. Kerry. Most of the wood is situated in the floodplain of the River Lee on sticky, gleyed clay.

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):

[91E0] Alluvial Forests*

The woodland at the site is dominated by native tree species: Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), Rusty Willow (*Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), with oak (*Quercus* spp.), Yew (*Taxus baccata*), elm (*Ulmus* sp.) and Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*) also occurring. Non-native tree species found include Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Horse-chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), poplar (*Populus* sp.), Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*). Three semi-natural woodland types are represented - areas dominated by Alder and Ash (following and adjacent to the River Lee); areas dominated by Ash and Hazel (on sloping, better-drained soil, mostly in the western half of the site); and areas dominated by Alder and Rusty Willow (on level sections further removed from the river).

The Alder/Ash-dominated woodland is a high canopy wood. The very large Alder trees present were probably planted, but much of the secondary regeneration is also very mature, being up to 100 years old. Sycamore, Horse-chestnut, poplar and Beech can also be found here. In the understorey species such as Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), elm, Spindle and Guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*) are found. The Alder/Ash-dominated woodland conforms well with the woodland type 'Alluvial Forest', listed with priority status on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

The Ash/Hazel-dominated woodland is also mature, with Sycamore, Hornbeam and Beech also present. Hazel is frequent in the sub-canopy, with Hawthorn and the occasional elm also occurring.

The Alder/willow woodland stands are, for the most part, dominated by Alder, with Rusty Willow occurring as scattered trees.

The ground flora is represented by Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*), Enchanter's-nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*), Soft Shield-fern (*Polystichum setiferum*), Broad Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*), Scaly Male-fern (*Dryopteris affinis*), Thin-spiked Wood-sedge (*Carex strigosa*), Remote Sedge (*C. remota*) and Pendulous Sedge (*C. pendula*).

Several plant species which are nationally or locally scarce are found on the site, including Rough Horsetail (*Equisetum hyemale*), Thin-spiked Wood-sedge, Dark-leaved Willow (*S. myrsinifolia*) and Wood Horsetail (*E. sylvaticum*). The rare moss *Pylaisia polyantha*, a species known in Ireland only from Counties Donegal, Kerry and Mayo, has also been recorded from the site.

Ballyseedy Wood is a nesting site for Long-eared Owl, and the river is frequented by Otters, a species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

The site is undisturbed and apparently infrequently visited by man. Non-native tree species are present within the site but account for less than 30% of the woodland. Exotic and potentially invasive species present include Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*), Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), Japanese Knotweed (*Reynovtria japonica*) and Bamboo. These are, however, localised within the site and are not found throughout the woodland. In fact, some stands of woodland are remarkable for the complete absence of exotic species.

Ballyseedy Wood is of prime importance for its Alder/Ash-dominated woodland stands, a habitat type that is rare and threatened in Europe. The site is also of significance for several rare or scarce plant species that occur there. The scarcity of woodlands in north Kerry adds to the importance of the site.