

**Site Name: Lough Nageeron SAC**

**Site Code: 002119**

Lough Nageeron SAC consists of a small lake is situated about 9 km west of Kilkieran in Connemara, Co. Galway. It overlooks Ard Bay and is connected to the sea by a small channel. It is, however, raised above sea level and it does not receive any saline water. The lake is an oligotrophic system with apparently good quality water.

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):

[3130] Oligotrophic to Mesotrophic Standing Waters [1833] Slender Naiad ( <i>Najas flexilis</i> )
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Lough Nageeron is surrounded by rocky undulating land. Aquatic plants recorded in the lake include Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*), Water Lobelia (*Lobelia dortmanna*), White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*), the pondweeds *Potamogeton berchtoldii* and *P. crispus*, and Alternate Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum alterniflorum*). The aquatic species of most interest is the rare Slender Naiad (*Najas flexilis*), a species which is found mainly in western oligotrophic lakes, and is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

A number of small islands are scattered around the lough. These islands support a dense vegetation, mainly of willows (*Salix* spp.) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). Reedbeds, mainly of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), are present around the lake shores, though none are extensive. Several areas of freshwater marsh occur, with typical species such as Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*). In places the marshes have a more acidic and boggy character, and here species such as Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) occur, along with bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.).

Wet grassland is the main habitat which borders the lake. It is closely grazed and supports grasses such as *Poa* spp., *Agrostis* spp., *Festuca* spp. and Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*). In the wetter areas Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) is common. The wet grass merges into wet heath in places and species such as Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succissa pratensis*) and Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*) appear. Remnants of the heath vegetation which would have surrounded most of the lake at one time still occur in places, but mainly at the north and north-west. Typical species include Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica cinerea*), St. Dabeoc's Heath (*Daboecia cantabrica*), Heather

(*Calluna vulgaris*), Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*) and Crested Dog-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*).

The main land use in the area is grazing by cattle. Agricultural improvement schemes have included scrub and heath clearance, and drainage of wet fields.

The main conservation interest of the site lies in the presence of Slender Naiad which is legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015 and is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The lake itself is also a good example of an oligotrophic lake, a habitat which is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.