

Site Name: Murvey Machair SAC

Site Code: 002129

Murvey machair SAC is located on the coast approximately 6.5 km west of Roundstone in Co. Galway. The site comprises a 30 m high granite hill, covered in windblown sand supplied from the adjacent beach, and a series of wetlands occurring in the low-lying area to the north of the hill.

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):

[21A0] Machairs* [1395] Petalwort (<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>)

The main habitat at this site is hill machair, with a typically herb-rich sward characterised by species such as Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), plantains (*Plantago coronopus* and *P. lanceolata*), White Clover (*Trifolium repens*) and mosses (e.g. *Tortula ruraliformis* and *Brachythecium albicans*). Seepage zones and damp hollows also occur and support abundant sedges, mosses, Fool's Water-cress (*Apium nodiflorum*), Brookweed (*Samolus valerandi*) and Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*). Because of its hilliness, Murvey machair is geomorphologically somewhat atypical of other Irish machairs. It is thought to represent the relict stages of a once more extensive system.

A population of the rare bryophyte Petalwort (*Petalophyllum ralfsii*) has recently been discovered associated with the machair habitat. This small thallose liverwort is rare in Europe and is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

The northern part of the site contains two loughs which provide an excellent example of hydrosere succession. The open waters contain abundant pondweeds (*Potamogeton* spp.) and are fringed with swamp, dominated by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*) and Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*). The swamp gives way to freshwater marsh and wet grassland. The eastern lake, Lough Namanawaun, is largely infilled.

These lakes contain two rare plant species - Slender Cottongrass (*Eriophorum gracile*) and Slender Naiad (*Najas flexilis*). Both are legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999, and listed in the Irish Red Data Book. The latter species is also listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

Most of the site is heavily grazed by sheep, cattle and rabbits. This is exacerbating the natural erosion along the back of the beach.

This site is of value primarily for its machair, a priority habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The lakes are also of importance in that they provide a good example of vegetational succession and are the site of two rare and protected plant species, one of which is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive.