

Site Name: Tully Lough SAC

Site Code: 002130

Tully Lough is situated in Connemara, Co. Galway, approximately 4 km north-west of Letterfrack and just over 1 km from the coast. Tully Mountain (peak 357 m) towers above the site to the south-west. It is a small to medium-sized oligotrophic lake set in a landscape of bog and pasture. A stream enters at the west end of the lake and another exits at the east end and flows to the sea.

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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The shoreline of Tully Lough is stony in parts but otherwise fringed by swamp or marsh vegetation. The aquatic vegetation is typically oligotrophic. Species present include Quillwort (*Isoetes lacustris*), Water Lobelia (*Lobelia dortmanna*), Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*), Pipewort (*Eriocaulon aquaticum*), Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*), Perfoliate Pondweed (*Potamogeton perfoliatus*), Alternate Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum alterniflorum*) and Canadian Waterweed (*Elodea canadensis*). The moss *Fontinalis antipyretica* occurs on rocks. The E.U. Habitats Directive Annex II plant species Slender Naiad (*Najas flexilis*) has been recorded from the lake. This species is also listed on the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015. The presence of Canadian Waterweed may indicate that the lake is not extremely oligotrophic. The fringing swamp and marsh vegetation includes Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*), Common Spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*), Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*) and Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*).

The lake is surrounded by blanket bog and wet grassland, improved to varying extents, to the south, east and north-east. Some of the blanket bog is fairly intact and has typical species such as Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). A species of very local distribution, St. Dabeoc's Heath (*Daboecia cantabrica*), occurs. The wet grassland includes species such as Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), sedges (e.g. *Carex nigra* and *C. echinata*), Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) and Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*). To the north and north-west the main habitat is improved grassland.

The lake has one large island, Heath Island, and several smaller ones. Mixed scrubby woodland occurs on these islands, mainly Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), willows (*Salix* spp.), the invasive species Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and several exotic conifers. The Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*) also occurs.

The house which occurs on Heath Island is a roost site for a nationally important breeding colony of Natterer's Bat – 140 bats were counted in 1992. The bats forage amongst the woodland on the island but also visit the mainland. Natterer's Bat is one of the scarcest species of bat in Ireland and is listed as a Red Data Book species.

The main threat to this site is further agricultural intensification, leading to loss of bog and wet grassland habitats surrounding the lake, and ultimately to eutrophication of the lake. The oligotrophic vegetation, including Slender Naiad, could be adversely affected. Afforestation in the catchment would also be a serious threat. Modifications to the house where the bats roost could affect their use of the site.

This site is of conservation value as it provides a good example of an oligotrophic lake, a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Of particular importance is the occurrence of the Annex II plant species Slender Naiad. The presence of a nationally important roost of Natterer's Bat is also of note.