



**Site Name: Drongawn Lough SAC**

**Site Code: 002187**

Drongawn Lough is situated on the northern side of the Kenmare River inlet in Co. Kerry, approximately 6 km to the east of Sneem. It is a moderate-sized saline lake lagoon which is separated from a tidal bay by a very narrow, silled inlet. Tidal exchange is restricted by the narrow inlet. The lagoon is deep in places, with a depth of 18 m recorded. Most of the bed of the lake appears to be solid rock or stone of various sizes. In sheltered bays, the substrate consists largely of peaty silt. Salinity in October 1996 measured 28-32 ppt although values as low as 10 ppt were recorded near freshwater inflows.

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):

[1150] Coastal Lagoons*
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Algal communities within Drongawn Lough are well developed. Species include the red algae *Polyides rotundus*, *Chondrus crispus*, *Codium fragile* and *Phyllophora pseudoceranooides*, the brown alga *Fucus serratus*, and the green algae *Chaetomorpha linum* and *Cladophora* spp. *Chaetomorpha linum* is a typical green lagoonal alga. Extensive beds of Spiral Tasselweed (*Ruppia cirrhosa*) occur.

The aquatic fauna of the lagoon is rich with 69 taxa recorded in a survey in 1996. Of these, three species are listed as lagoonal specialists in Britain (*Palaemonetes varians*, *Hydrobia ventrosa* and *Cerastoderma glaucum*), and one is a proposed lagoonal specialist in Ireland (*Neomysis integer*). Three notable species of crustaceans which are known from few other sites in Ireland have been recorded: *Jaera forsmanni*, *Erichthonius difformis* and *Lembos longipes*.

The lagoon is fringed in parts by salt tolerant vegetation, with species such as Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*), Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*) and Sea Arrowgrass (*Triglochin maritima*) occurring. Other parts of the shoreline are bare. A study of the beetles (Order Coleoptera) along the margins of the lagoon resulted in six species of carabid (ground beetles) and ten species of staphylinid. One species, *Stenus lustrator*, is rare in Ireland and appears to be local in Europe.

A very small brackish type lake, Drongawn Lough Lower, occurs east of the main lagoon. The remainder of the land in the site is a mix of heath, blanket bog and wet grassland. Several small areas of flush vegetation occur around the lagoon. Some of the wet grassland and heath is grazed and, in the eastern part of the site, partly

improved. Land use in the vicinity is of low intensity and there are no known significant threats to the site.

The lagoon habitat within the site is an excellent example of a deep, silled, polyhaline saline lake lagoon in almost pristine condition. The fauna is rich, with several lagoonal specialists and apparently rare species. While no very rare plants have been recorded in the lagoon, the diversity of algae and the abundance of *Ruppia cirrhosa* are notable. The site is considered to be of high conservation importance.