



Site Name: Farranamanagh Lough SAC

Site Code: 002189

Farranamanagh Lough is a small, shallow (2 m), sedimentary lagoon situated on the south side of the Sheep's Head peninsula in west Co. Cork. This lagoon is in an almost completely natural condition lying behind a stony barrier through which runs an apparently permanent outlet. Freshwater streams enter from the north and seawater enters at spring tides through the outlet, and also by percolation and overtopping of the barrier during storms. Salinity ranged from 2 to 25 ppt during 1996 and probably varies considerably depending on relative input of freshwater from rainfall and seawater incursions during high tides. The bedrock is Old Red Sandstone.

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* [1220] Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks

The fauna of the lagoon is relatively poor, with only 16 taxa recorded in a survey in 1996. However, one of these is listed as a lagoonal specialist in Britain (*Palaemonetes varians*), and three are lagoonal specialists for Ireland (*Neomysis integer*, *Jaera nordmanni* and *Allomelita pellucida*). The amphipod *Allomelita pellucida* is considered to be rare in Ireland. Floristically, the lagoon has been described as "species poor but potentially valuable" - a full aquatic survey has not been carried out. The most obvious interesting feature of the flora is a dense bed of tasselweed (*Ruppia* sp.), a lagoonal specialist. Filamentous green algae also occur. The apparent low floral and faunal diversity of this lagoon may be due to extreme and rapid variations in salinity.

The shingle barrier supports a good example of the community 'perennial vegetation of stony banks'. It has sparse vegetation on the seaward side where the principal species is Spear-leaved Orache (*Atriplex prostrata*). On the plateau of the barrier and on the leeward side, the vegetation is well developed and includes lichens that are indicative of long-term stability. The dominant vegetation here is a species-rich grassy sward, with species such as Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Curled Dock (*Rumex crispus*), Sea Mayweed (*Matricaria maritima*), Sea Campion (*Silene vulgaris* subsp. *maritima*), English Stonecrop (*Sedum anglicum*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), Greater Sea-spurrey (*Spergularia media*) and Hairy Tare (*Vicia hirsuta*), amongst others.

Saltmarsh vegetation fringes the eastern shore of the lagoon, while freshwater marsh vegetation fringes the northern part of the lagoon. Some wet grassland and wet scrub woodland occur north of the lagoon on both sides of the inlet stream. Species such as Rusty Willow (*Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*), Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*) are found here.

The Kerry Slug (*Geomalacus maculosus*), a species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, has been recorded within the site.

The main threat to this site is gravel extraction which has occurred in the past and has apparently lowered and weakened the barrier allowing more frequent incursions of seawater during storms.

While this lagoon is small in size, geomorphologically it is a good representative of a sedimentary lagoon with an inlet in almost completely natural condition. As there are only six known examples of this type of lagoon in the country, Farranamanagh Lough is of considerable conservation importance. The shingle barrier also supports a fine example of the community 'perennial vegetation of stony banks'.