



Site Name: Cahermore Turlough SAC

Site Code: 002294

Cahermore Turlough SAC is situated in the limestone lowlands of south Co. Galway, about 5 km north-west of Gort and 5.5 km south-east of Kinvara. It is part of a series of lakes and turloughs in the region, most of which are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). The nearest is Caherglassaun Turlough, the water levels of which are slightly higher than Cahermore. The site is mostly covered by drift which is mounded into hillocks in the south-eastern parts.

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):

[3180] Turloughs*

The turlough is on the dry end of the spectrum, and there is no standing water in summer except for a few small ponds dug for cattle. A few collapse features occur in the drift on the southern side with a regular swallow-hole at the edge of the flooded area. Another hole occurs in the south-east corner. The turlough appears to flood largely from the southern side.

The site has quite a uniform grassland cover. Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Rough Meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*), Smooth Meadow-grass (*Poa pratensis*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and Couch Grass (*Elymus repens*) are the main constituents. Hairy Sedge (*Carex hirta*) and Common Sedge (*C. nigra*) are widespread over the site. Marsh Foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*) grows in the southern half. Pools dug into the drift have a varied flora, some have Pond Water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus peltatus*) and Common Duckweed (*Lemna minor*) while others have Amphibious Bistort (*Polygonum amphibium*), Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), Water Forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*) and Common Spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*).

Two areas of limestone pavement which are largely scrub-covered occur. The one in the east is grazed by sheep and has grassland plant species such as Wild Thyme (*Thymus praecox*) and Downy Oat-grass (*Avenula pubescens*). The shrubs on this pavement include Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Burnet Rose (*Rosa pimpinellifolia*), Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) and the exotic species Small-leaved Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster microphyllus*). A larger area of turlough scrub in the northern part is impenetrable and consists of Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*), Blackthorn and Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*). There is some Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*) grassland on the fringes of this scrub.

The site holds a diverse population of wintering waterbirds at times of flood. Dunlin are not common inland but occurred throughout the 1998/99 winter season. The following counts were made on 15th December 1998 and, in parentheses, 30th November 2000: Whooper Swan 49 (35); Mute Swan 9 (5); Wigeon 180 (160); Teal 10 (-); Mallard 6 (22); Pochard 86 (12); Tufted Duck - (8); Lapwing 250 (150); Curlew 25 (-); Dunlin 120 (70); Redshank - (4). Bewick's Swan (7, winter 1995/96) and Golden Plover (60) have been recorded.

Cahermore Turlough supports a wide range of turlough habitats with well-developed plant communities. The amount and quality of the developing woodland is a special feature of this turlough. Whooper Swan, Bewick's Swan and Golden Plover are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, and their presence at the site adds further to its importance and value.