

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: LOUGH DERRAVARAGH SPA**

**SITE CODE: 0004043**

Lough Derravaragh is located approximately 12 km north of Mullingar town in Co. Westmeath. It is a medium- to large-sized lake of relatively shallow water (maximum depth 23 m). The lake extends along a south-east/north-west axis for approximately 8 km. The Inny River, a tributary of the River Shannon, is the main inflowing and outflowing river. It is a typical limestone lake with water of high hardness and alkaline pH, and is classified as a mesotrophic system.

At the western end of the lake are extensive areas of swamp dominated by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*). Elsewhere along the shore there is freshwater marsh vegetation dominated by sedges (*Carex* spp.) and tussock-forming grasses such as Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) and fescues (*Festuca* spp.), with a range of flowering herbs. The lakeshore is a mineral-rich substrate and several plant species of fen habitats occur in abundance, such as Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) and Long-stalked Yellow-sedge (*Carex lepidocarpa*). Deciduous woodland fringes the lake in some areas.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Whooper Swan, Pochard, Tufted Duck and Coot. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands and, as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.

Lough Derravaragh is one of the most important midland lakes for wintering waterfowl. It supports nationally important populations of Whooper Swan (102), Pochard (3,129), Tufted Duck (1,073) and Coot (1,358) - all counts are mean peaks for the five winters 1995/96-1999/2000. The Pochard population is of particular note as it represents over 6% of the all-Ireland population total, and at times has exceeded the threshold for international importance (i.e. 3,500). Other species which occur include Mute Swan (159), Little Grebe (42) Great Crested Grebe (34), Cormorant (34), Wigeon (207), Teal (52), Mallard (195), Pintail (6), Shoveler (12), Goldeneye (46), Golden Plover (158) and Lapwing (1,079). The lake is occasionally used as a roost site by small numbers of Greenland White-fronted Goose.

Lough Derravaragh is of major ornithological importance as it regularly supports nationally important populations of four species, and at times is used by the internationally important population of Greenland White-fronted Goose which is based in the region. Also of note is that three of the species which occur at the site, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Whooper Swan and Golden Plover, are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Lough Derravaragh is a Ramsar Convention site.

7.7.2014