

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: GLEN LOUGH SPA

SITE CODE: 004045

Glen Lough is situated about 5 km north-west of Lough Iron on the border of Co. Westmeath and Co. Longford. Extensive drainage in the 1960s has resulted in a dramatic drop in the watertable here, with the result that there is now little open water, except during flooding in the winter months. Sedge-dominated freshwater marsh now occupies the majority of what was once open water. Plant species present include Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), Water Horsetail (*Equisetium fluviatile*) and Canary Reed-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*). Other habitats present include reedswamp, wet and dry grassland, cutaway bog colonised by heath vegetation, scrub and wet willow (*Salix* spp.) woodland.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Whooper Swan.

An internationally important Whooper Swan population uses the site at times. This flock (mean peak of 327 individuals for the 5 seasons 1995/96-1999/2000) also uses Lough Iron and a range of grassland feeding areas in the vicinity. At times, the site is visited by part of the internationally important Midland lakes Greenland White-fronted Goose population, although numbers are low (17). Dabbling ducks are well represented, but in relatively low numbers, and include such species as Wigeon (81), Teal (69), Mallard (46), Pintail (7) and Shoveler (23). Lapwing (189) is also found in the area (all figures are mean peaks for the 5 seasons 1995/96-1999/2000).

Whilst this site attracts a range of wintering waterfowl, the principal ornithological interest lies in the internationally important Whooper Swan population that is based in the area. Whooper Swan is of particular note as it is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Greenland White-fronted Goose, nowadays an occasional visitor to the site, is also listed on Annex I of this Directive. The site provides useful habitat for Shoveler, which in Ireland is a fairly localised species. Glen Lough is a Ramsar Convention site.