

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LOUGH OUGHTER COMPLEX SPA

SITE CODE: 004049

Lough Oughter and its associated loughs occupy much of the lowland drumlin belt in north and central Co. Cavan between Belturbet, Killashandra and Cavan town. This area comprises a maze of waterways, islands, small lakes and peninsulas. Lough Oughter, the largest lake in the site, is relatively shallow (maximum depth of 10 m) and considered to be a naturally eutrophic system. Its main inflowing rivers are the River Erne and the Annalee River, whilst the main outflow is the River Erne, which connects the lake to Upper Lough Erne and Lower Lough Erne to the north.

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

The Lough Oughter Complex is of importance for a range of wintering waterfowl. Of particular note is an internationally important population of Whooper Swan (318) that is based in the area and which uses the lakes as a roost - all figures are five year mean peaks for the period 1995/96 to 1999/2000. A population of Greenland White-fronted Goose (75) of regional importance also roosts on the lakes and feeds mainly on agriculturally improved grassland nearby. The site supports nationally important wintering populations of two species, Great Crested Grebe (89) and Wigeon (903). Other species which occur regularly include Mute Swan (139), Teal (220), Mallard (336), Pochard (58), Tufted Duck (105), Goldeneye (117), Lapwing (381), Curlew (33), Little Grebe (8), Cormorant (81) and Black-headed Gull (311). A small colony of Common Tern occurs (10 pairs recorded at Farnham Lough in 1995).

Lough Oughter is at the centre of the Irish breeding range of Great Crested Grebe and the site supports in excess of 10% of the estimated national breeding total of this species (115 individuals in 1986-88).

The Lough Oughter Complex SPA is of ornithological importance for its wintering waterbird populations. Of particular note is the internationally important population of Whooper Swan that is based in the area. The site also supports nationally important populations of a further two wintering species. Two of the species which occur regularly are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, i.e. Whooper Swan and Greenland White-fronted Goose. Lough Oughter is a Ramsar Convention site and a Wildfowl Sanctuary.