

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LOUGH ARROW SPA

SITE CODE: 004050

Lough Arrow is a large limestone lake situated almost entirely within Co. Sligo with a small section extending into Co. Roscommon. It is sheltered on three sides by hills and is the source of the Unshin River which flows north-westwards from its northern end. It has a relatively small catchment and is largely spring-fed. The average depth of water is 9 m (maximum 33 m). The lake is classified as a mesotrophic system. There is a well-developed submerged aquatic flora, with a notable charophyte community. The shores of the lake are for the most part stony, though several bays occur in which Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*) and Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) are found in abundance. In places the reedbeds extend out into the lake and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) occur.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Little Grebe and Tufted Duck. 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 Arrow supports nationally important populations of Little Grebe (185) and Tufted Duck (467). Other species that occur include Whooper Swan (35), Goldeneye (96), Great Crested Grebe (33) and Coot (201) – all figures are five year mean peaks for the period 2001/02 to 2005/06. It is also a breeding site for a number of species including Great Crested Grebe (23 pairs in 1992), Common Scoter (3 pairs in 1999), Tufted Duck (c. 50 pairs in 1992) and Red-breasted Merganser (26 pairs in 1992). Common Gull (84 pairs) and Lesser Black-backed Gull (110 pairs) also breed on islands in the lake – data from 1993.

Lough Arrow is an important game fishery, with good stocks of Brown Trout and Eel.

Lough Arrow SPA is of ornithological importance on account of the nationally important populations of Little Grebe and Tufted Duck that are associated with the lake. The occurrence of Whooper Swan, a species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, is of note.

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