

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LOUGH DERG (DONEGAL) SPA

SITE CODE: 004057

Lough Derg is a large, oligotrophic lake situated north of Pettigo, Co. Donegal. The lake lies in a landscape of extensive blanket bogs and conifer plantations which make up its catchment. The underlying geology of the area is acid gneiss with some basic intrusions. The lakeshore is mainly stony, and marginal vegetation is poorly developed due to the close proximity of the conifer plantations. The lake has a number of islands.

The lakeshore has a sparse covering of Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*), Water Lobelia (*Lobelia dortmanna*) and the moss *Fontinalis antipyretica*. Broad-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*) and Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*) are found on the margins. There are areas of scrub along parts of the lake shores and on the ungrazed islands. These are composed of Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), willow (*Salix* spp.), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and birch (*Betula* sp.).

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Lesser Black-backed Gull and Herring Gull.

A large colony of nesting gulls was discovered on Inishgoosk Island in 1977. A survey in 1999 estimated a population of 500 pairs of Lesser Black-backed Gull, which is the largest colony in the country. An estimated 100 pairs of Herring Gull were also present, which is of national importance. Common Gull has bred here in the past.

The Pettigo Plateau Greenland White-fronted Goose flock formerly used Lough Derg as a feeding and/or roost site. Inishgoosk Island appeared to be the main feeding area used. In the 1980s, the bogs were largely deserted in favour of coastal grassland sites at Durnesh Lough and Brownhall. Wintering waterfowl are scarce on Lough Derg due to the oligotrophic character of the system but small numbers of Tufted Duck, Mallard and Goldeneye occur. A feral Greylag Goose flock is resident at the site.

Arctic Char (*Salvelinus alpinus*), a threatened Red Data Book species, was recorded from the lake as recently 1990/91.

Lough Derg SPA is of national importance for both Lesser Black-backed Gull and Herring Gull. In the past it was used by Greenland White-fronted Goose, a species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive

27.1.2012