

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: LOUGH SHEELIN SPA**

**SITE CODE: 004065**

Lough Sheelin is a medium to large-sized lake, located on the border of Counties Cavan, Westmeath and Meath. It is a relatively shallow alkaline lake with a maximum depth of 14 m. The Inny River, a main tributary of the River Shannon, is the main outflow from the lake.

The shore of the lake is wooded in places and there are some very small offshore islands with willows (*Salix aurita* and *S. cinerea*). The islands are fringed by swamp communities of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Common Clubrush (*Scirpus lacustris*) and Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*). A good range of Charophytes has been recorded from the lake, including *Chare denudata*, a Red Data Book species.

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, Pochard, Tufted Duck and Goldeneye. 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.

Despite variable water quality in recent decades, Lough Sheelin remains a very important site for wintering waterfowl, especially diving duck. It supports nationally important populations of four species, i.e. Great Crested Grebe (140), Pochard (546), Tufted Duck (762) and Goldeneye (224) - all figures are mean peaks for the 5 winters 1995/96-1999/2000. A number of other species occur in relatively low numbers, including Mute Swan (28), Mallard (76), Coot (24), Little Grebe (19), Cormorant (42) and Black-headed Gull (202).

Lough Sheelin is a nationally important site for four species of wintering wildfowl and is one of the main Midlands lakes sites for wintering birds.