

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: INISHMURRAY SPA**

**SITE CODE: 004068**

Inishmurray is an exposed island located *c.* 6 km north-west of Streedagh Point, County Sligo in Donegal Bay. The nearest coastal village is Grange. It is a low, flat island of some 95 ha (being *c.* 3.75 km long and 0.75 km at its widest part), composed of Carboniferous shale/sandstone.

Wet, acid grassland is the dominant habitat, though dry grassland and scrub also occur. Several small ponds are present. There is a rocky shoreline and some low rock and boulder clay cliffs at the western end. The surrounding seas to a distance of 200 m from the shoreline are included in the site. The island has been uninhabited since the 1950s and is an important archaeological site, being well-known for its early Christian remains.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Shag, Barnacle Goose, Herring Gull and Arctic Tern.

Inishmurray is an important site for breeding seabirds. It is a traditional site for terns, with 36 pairs of Common Tern and 113 pairs of Arctic Tern in 1995. The Arctic Tern population at the site is of national importance. Numbers of breeding terns can vary considerably between years and higher numbers have been recorded in the past. The island also has nationally important populations of breeding Shag (104 pairs) and Herring Gull (111 pairs) – all data from 2000. Common Gull (10 pairs), Great Black-backed Gull (100+ pairs) and Lesser Black-backed Gull (35 pairs) also breed. Fulmar nest in relatively low numbers (83 pairs) due to the scarcity of suitable cliffs, and there is a regionally important population of Black Guillemot (15 individuals). Inishmurray is also a known site for Storm Petrel, with an estimated 500 pairs. This is the only colony in County Sligo for this nocturnal burrow-nester. A population of Eider (103 individuals), a sea duck that in Ireland is confined to the northern coasts has been recorded at this site.

The site is a regular roost site for a wintering population of Barnacle Goose. The birds that utilise the island are part of the internationally important population that is centred at Ballintemple and Lissadell on the mainland.

Inishmurray is a site of high ornithological importance for both breeding and wintering birds. Of particular note is that four of the species which occur regularly, Barnacle Goose, Storm Petrel, Arctic Tern and Common Tern, are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

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