

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: ILLANMASTER SPA

SITE CODE: 004074

Illanmaster is a steep, rocky island situated just off the north Co. Mayo coast. It rises to 107 m and is topped with a maritime grassy sward. The surrounding seas to a distance of 500 m are included in the site. The southern boundary of the site adjoins the mainland shoreline. While close to the mainland, access to the island is difficult.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Storm Petrel.

The site supports an internationally important population of Storm Petrel, which is one of the largest in the region. While it was not surveyed during the Seabird 2000 census, an estimate of 7,500 pairs was made prior to 1980. Other species which were recorded breeding in 1999 include Fulmar (8 pairs in 1999), Puffin (1,367 pairs) Great Black-backed Gull (13 pairs) and Black Guillemot (5 pairs). Illanmaster is visited at times by a wintering Barnacle Goose flock, though numbers apparently are less than 50.

Illanmaster has been owned by BirdWatch Ireland since 1970.

Illanmaster SPA is of ornithological importance because it supports an internationally important population of Storm Petrel. The presence of Storm Petrel and Barnacle Goose is of particular note as these species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.