

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: INISHGLORA AND INISHKEERAGH SPA

SITE CODE: 004084

The site comprises the two islands, Inishglora and Inishkeeragh, as well as a number of smaller islets and rocks situated *c.* 1.5-3 km west of the Mullet Peninsula, Co. Mayo. They are part of a larger grouping of similar islands that includes the Inishkeas and the Duvillauns. Inishglora is the larger of the main islands and had been inhabited in the Early Christian period. Both are fairly low-lying and support maritime grassland vegetation. The marine waters surrounding the islands and islets to a distance of not less than 200 m are included in the site.

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

Storm Petrel has a long history of breeding on both of the main islands. When surveyed during the course of the Seabird 2000 project, Inishglora had 1,788 pairs and Inishkeeragh 1,635 pairs, giving a total of 3,423 pairs. This is the most accurate assessment to date and easily exceeds the threshold for national importance. The islands are also of national importance for Arctic Tern (105 pairs in 1995), Cormorant (57 pairs in 1987), Shag (61 pairs in 2001), Lesser Black-backed Gull (66 pairs in 2001) and Herring Gull (78 pairs in 2001). Other breeding birds recorded in 2001 include Great Black-backed Gull (20+ pairs), Common Gull (6 pairs) and Black Guillemot (<10 pairs).

Both islands are frequented by part of the large Barnacle Goose population centred on the Mullet and Inishkeas, which is the largest concentration in the country - a four year survey mean of 136 birds is recorded from the site, based on four surveys between 1993 and 2003. The islands provide good feeding habitat and a safe refuge for the geese.

Inishglora and Inishkeeragh form part of a larger group of islands, together with the Inishkeas and the Duvillauns, which hold an important breeding population of Grey Seal. Estimates in 1983 for the total population of this assemblage put the number of animals in the range 700-900, about a third of the known Irish breeding population.

The Inishglora and Inishkeeragh SPA is one of the most important seabird sites in the region, with nationally important populations of Storm Petrel, Cormorant, Shag, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull and Arctic Tern. The main islands regularly support nationally important numbers of wintering Barnacle Goose. The occurrence of Storm Petrel, Arctic Tern and Barnacle Goose is of particular note as these are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

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