

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: RIVER LITTLE BROSNA CALLOWS SPA**

**SITE CODE: 004086**

The River Little Brosna Callows SPA follows the River Brosna from its confluence with the River Shannon for approximately 9 km south-eastwards to just beyond New Bridge on the R438 road. The site extends along both sides of the river within counties Offaly and Tipperary. The main habitat present is the extensive area of low-lying callow grassland along the floodplain of the river. These grasslands are subject to prolonged flooding in winter, early spring and occasionally in summer.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Wigeon, Teal, Pintail, Shoveler, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Black-Tailed Godwit and Black-Headed Gull. The site is also of special conservation interest for holding an assemblage of over 20,000 wintering waterbirds. 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.

The River Little Brosna Callows is an internationally important site for wintering waterfowl, being notable both for numbers and diversity of species. Of particular note is the internationally important Greenland White-fronted Goose flock (527) that is based along the Brosna - mean peak count for the five winters 1994/95 to 1998/99. The populations of Golden Plover (10,577 – 3 year mean peak from aerial surveys between 1995/96 and 1999/2000) and Black-tailed Godwit (2,900 - 4 year mean peak between 1995/96 and 1999/2000) are also of international importance. The River Little Brosna Callows is an important spring passage site and the Black-tailed Godwit flock, which is the largest in the country, exceeds over 4,000 birds on some occasions. A further seven species have populations of national importance, i.e. Whooper Swan (122), Wigeon (8,116), Teal (2,683), Pintail (130), Shoveler (164), Lapwing (6,552) and Black-headed Gull (1,939) – all figures are 4 year mean peaks between 1995/96 and 1999/2000 except Lapwing (3 year mean peak from aerial surveys between 1995/96 and 1999/2000) and Black-headed Gull (2 year mean peak for 1999/2000 and 2000/01). The populations of Wigeon, Teal and Golden Plover are consistently among the largest in the country. Other species which occur include Mute Swan (79), Mallard (334), Pochard (38), Dunlin (434) and Curlew (194); the population of Dunlin is of particular note as it comprises the largest inland population in the country.

The callows are also of importance for breeding waders, and such species as Redshank (65 pairs in 1987 and 22 pairs in 2002), Snipe (35 pairs in 1987 and 23 pairs in 2002) and Lapwing (41 pairs in 1987) have been recorded breeding here. Corncrake formerly bred on the Brosna callows (2 calling birds recorded in 1993), and may still breed occasionally.

The River Little Brosna Callows SPA is one of the top sites in the country for wintering waterfowl and part of the site is a Wildfowl Sanctuary. It is of international importance on account of the total numbers of birds that use it, as well as for its Greenland White-fronted Goose, Golden Plover and Black-tailed Godwit populations. In addition, there are a further seven species with nationally important populations, several of which are the largest in the country. Also of note is that three of the species which occur regularly, i.e. Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose and Golden Plover, are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

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