

## **SITE SYNOPSIS**

**SITE NAME: COOLE-GARRYLAND SPA**

**SITE CODE: 004107**

The Coole-Garryland SPA is situated in a low-lying karstic limestone area west of Gort, Co. Galway. It comprises a series of turloughs, which are fed by springs and a partly submerged river, surrounded by woodland, pasture and limestone heath. Coole Lough is the largest and most permanent of the turloughs, and retains some water throughout the year. Water levels vary greatly depending on rainfall and this has consequences on the numbers of birds present. During prolonged dry spells, higher numbers of some species are present as birds from other sites in the catchment are attracted to the permanent waters of Coole Lough.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for Whooper Swan.

The site is of international importance for Whooper Swan (214), which utilise it for both feeding and roosting purposes. In the past the site was frequented by Bewick's Swan but birds have not been present in recent winters, reflecting a decline that has occurred throughout the country. A good diversity of other wintering birds occurs, including Wigeon (606), Teal (157), Mallard (214), Shoveler (14), Pochard (90), Tufted Duck (67), Lapwing (215) and Curlew (72) – all figures are five year mean peaks for the period 1995/96 to 1999/2000. Dunlin, a scarce species inland, is a visitor to the site at times. In 1996 two pairs of Common Sandpiper bred at Coole Lough.

Coole-Garryland SPA is of international importance for its population of Whooper Swan, a species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Coole Lough, a Wildfowl Sanctuary, has particular significance for wintering waterfowl as during prolonged dry spells it is one of the few sites in the catchment which retains open water. Coole Lough and Garryland Wood is a Ramsar Convention site, and parts of the Coole-Garryland SPA are designated as Statutory Nature Reserves and are managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

31.10.2014