

## **SITE SYNOPSIS**

**SITE NAME: THE GEARAGH SPA**

**SITE CODE: 004109**

The Gearagh, located approximately 2 km south-west of Macroom, Co. Cork, comprises a stretch of the River Lee that was dammed in the 1950s as part of a hydroelectric scheme. The river valley formerly held an extensive area of alluvial forest but only part of the forest now survives. The SPA extends from Annahala bridge westwards to Toon bridge. The principal habitat is a shallow lake or reservoir which is fringed by wet woodland, scrub and grassland that is prone to flooding. Alluvial forest occurs on islands. At times of low water, a diverse pioneer plant community develops on the mud.

At the time this site was designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) it was utilised by nationally important populations of four species, i.e. Wigeon, Teal, Mallard and Coot, and each of these species is regarded as a special conservation interest for this SPA.

The Gearagh supported nationally important population of Wigeon (1,060), Teal (929) Mallard (478) and Coot (369) - all figures are two year mean peaks for the period 1994/95 to 1995/96. Other species that occurred at that time include Mute Swan (76), Whooper Swan (78), Gadwall (9), Shoveler (32), Pochard (106), Tufted Duck (237), Goldeneye (25), Cormorant (23), Lapwing (1,560), Golden Plover (1,748) and Curlew (335). A feral Greylag Goose flock is present in the area. A few pairs each of Great Crested Grebe and Tufted Duck breed.

The Gearagh is a Nature Reserve, a Ramsar Convention site and a Council of Europe Biogenetic Reserve.