

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LOUGH NILLAN BOG SPA

SITE CODE: 004110

Lough Nillan Bog SPA covers a large area of the hills immediately south of Glenties in Co. Donegal. The site extends from Owenea Lough in the west to the summit of Silver Hill in the east. Most of the area is underlain by dark, metamorphic siltstones but a few igneous intrusions also occur. The site comprises an extensive complex of blanket bog, wet heath, lakes, rivers and streams, with the topography varying from level plains to steep hills. The bog has a range of micro-topographical features (e.g. hummocks, inter-connecting pools and flushes) and vegetation communities.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Greenland White-fronted Goose, Merlin, Golden Plover and Dunlin.

The site provides one of only two known bogland feeding areas used by the Sheskinmore Lough Greenland White-fronted Goose flock. Despite a decline in the size of this flock since the 1980s significant numbers of birds still visit the site (53 - peak count in 1999/2000).

The site supports an excellent range of bird species typical of peatland habitats. It has one of the largest known concentrations of breeding Golden Plover in the country – a survey in 2002 recorded 16 nesting pairs. Dunlin (subsp. *schinzii*) also breeds at the site (6 pairs recorded in 2002). Furthermore, the site provides valuable foraging habitat for up to five pairs of Merlin which are known to have territories in the vicinity. Other species utilising the site include Red-throated Diver and Red Grouse.

Lough Nillan Bog SPA is of high ornithological importance, with nationally important populations of breeding Merlin, Golden Plover and Dunlin (subsp. *schinzii*). Whilst the size of the Greenland White-fronted Goose flock has declined, the site is still of significance as it is one of the few traditional bog sites in the region that is still used by the species. The occurrence of Greenland White-fronted Goose, Merlin, Golden Plover, Dunlin (subsp. *schinzii*) and Red-throated Diver, which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, is of particular note.

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