

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: ILLAUNONEARAUN SPA

SITE CODE: 004114

Illaunonearaun is a small inaccessible island located approximately 300 m off the west Co. Clare coast, about 7 km south-west of Kilkee. It is a large flat-topped sea stack surrounded by high cliffs and a rocky shore. Several rocky reefs occur off the north-west shore. The island supports a maritime grassland sward dominated by Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and with a variety of typical maritime plants such as Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Sea Campion (*Silene vulgaris* subsp. *maritima*) and Sea Mayweed (*Matricaria maritima*) also occurring. The sea surrounding the island, to a distance of 200 m, where seabirds forage, bathe and socialise, is 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: Barnacle Goose.

The island is regularly used in winter by a Barnacle Goose flock. Flock size varies as birds move between here and Mutton Island to the north; up to 200 birds have been recorded (as, for example, in spring 1988), but numbers are usually less than this, such as in 1994 (22 birds) and 1998 (142 birds).

The island is an important breeding site for seabirds. A Cormorant colony was established in the 1970s and 60 individuals were recorded in 1995. Other species which breed include Fulmar (10 pairs in 1993), Great Black-backed Gull (*c.* 25 pairs), Lesser Black-backed Gull (35 pairs in 1999) and Herring Gull (6 pairs in 2002).

Illaunonearaun SPA is of conservation importance due to the presence of a Barnacle Goose flock that exceeds the qualifying threshold for national importance; this species is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

31.10.2014