

## **SITE SYNOPSIS**

**SITE NAME: INISHKEEL SPA**

**SITE CODE: 004116**

Inishkeel is a small island situated approximately 500 m offshore of Portnoo in the inner part of Gweebarra Bay in west Co. Donegal. At low tide it is accessible from the mainland by a sand spit. The island is largely comprised of Dalradian metasediments of the Lower Falcarragh Pelites formation, but there is a large dyke of metadolerite in the centre of the island, which reaches a peak of 19 m above sea level. It is a rugged, low-lying island which is largely vegetated by a maritime grassland sward. The site includes the surrounding seas, to a distance of 200 m from the shore.

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 of particular importance as it provides feeding and refuge for a nationally important Barnacle Goose population. It regularly supports 218 birds (four survey mean from surveys conducted between 1993 and 2003) but has significantly greater numbers some years (325 and 327 birds in the springs of 1993 and 1994 respectively). The geese commute to other sites, notably Roaninish further to the west (320 birds in spring 1999). Long-tailed Duck (31 individuals recorded in March 1997) and Great Northern Diver are regularly present in the surrounding waters. Eider is also frequently seen around the island and a very high count of 500 birds was made in the winter of 1987/88; this species also breeds on Inishkeel.

Inishkeel SPA is of high ornithological importance as it is one of several sites in the area frequented by a nationally important population of Barnacle Goose. The regular occurrence of two species that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, Barnacle Goose and Great Northern Diver, is of note.