

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: ROANINISH SPA

SITE CODE: 004121

The site comprises a tight group of small, flat, low-lying, uninhabited islets surrounded by extensive intertidal rocks, situated in Gweebarra Bay, approximately 3 km north-west of Dunmore Head in Co. Donegal. Its highest point is 9 m above sea level. Much of the site is sparsely vegetated, with the exception of the main island, Roaninish, which supports lush maritime grassland. Two small ponds occur on Roaninish and support some aquatic species. The surrounding seas to a distance of 200 m are included within 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 and Herring Gull.

Roaninish is an important breeding site for several seabird species. A census in June 2000 recorded Cormorant (36 pairs), Shag (6 pairs), Herring Gull (278 pairs), Great Black-backed Gull (29 pairs), Arctic Tern (11 pairs) and Black Guillemot (13 pairs). The Herring Gull population is of national importance. Higher numbers of Arctic Tern have been recorded in the past, as well as some Common Tern and Little Tern. Roaninish is a long-established breeding site for Storm Petrel and in 2001 a total of 491 pairs were estimated. Eider, a localised breeding species in Ireland, breeds in substantial numbers on the islands (up to 60 pairs have been recorded).

Roaninish is a wintering site for Barnacle Goose (144 – a survey mean between 1993 and 2003). Birds are not always present, however, as they commute between various other sites in the vicinity, notably Inishkeel closer inshore and Sheskinmore on the mainland. Roaninish is also occasionally used for roosting at night by the Greenland White-fronted Goose flock (*c.* 50-60 individuals) that feeds on the mainland.

Roaninish SPA is of high ornithological importance for its breeding gull population and wintering geese. Of note is the presence of several species including Storm Petrel, Barnacle Goose, Arctic Tern and Greenland White-fronted Goose which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

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