

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: ILLANCRONE AND INISHKEERAGH SPA

SITE CODE: 004132

Illancrone and Inishkeeragh are two marine islands situated 8 to 9 km west of the town of Dunglow and south of Aranmore Island, Co. Donegal. Illancrone comprises areas of rock, shingle and short grassland. Inishkeeragh is a medium-sized, low-lying island surrounded by extensive intertidal rocks and, although now uninhabited, previous occupation has resulted in the island being divided into a system of enclosed fields. These fields have now reverted to unimproved dry grassland grazed by sheep.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Barnacle Goose, Common Tern, Arctic Tern and Little Tern.

Both islands are particularly important as breeding sites for seabirds. The following species were recorded from the site in 1995: Common Tern (59 pairs), Arctic Tern (224 pairs), Little Tern (13 pairs) and Sandwich Tern (1 pair). The Arctic Tern colony on Illancrone has been known since 1954 and, in 1984, was the largest known nesting colony for the species in Co. Donegal (132 pairs). Other seabird species recorded from Inishkeeragh include Common Gull (150 individuals in 1984), Herring Gull (100 individuals in 1984), Lesser Black-backed Gull (20 individuals in 1984) and Roseate Tern (3 pairs on Illancrone in 1984 and 2 pairs on Inishkeeragh in 1969).

The site also supports a nationally important Barnacle Goose flock (235 - mean of four counts between 1993 and 2003) which uses the islands for feeding over the winter.

Illancrone and Inishkeeragh SPA is of considerable conservation significance for the colonies of breeding seabirds and the Barnacle Goose flock that use it. Many of the species recorded from the site are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, i.e. Barnacle Goose, Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Little Tern, Sandwich Tern and Roseate Tern.

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