

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: LOUGH REA SPA**

**SITE CODE: 004134**

Lough Rea, a hard water lake, is situated directly south of the town of Loughrea, Co. Galway. The lake is 2.5 km at its longest axis. The underlying geology of the area is of Carboniferous limestone and water transparency is very high. The lake, which is fed by springs and by a stream, reaches a maximum depth of 15 m.

Some species of stonewort (a type of alga) characteristic of calcareous waters have been recorded in Lough Rea, including *Chara curta* and *C. contraria*. The Red Data Book species *C. tomentosa* has also been found here. Other aquatic plants present include Slender-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton filiformis*), Lesser Pondweed (*P. pusillus*), Fennel Pondweed (*P. pectinatus*), Spiked Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), Least Bur-reed (*Sparganium minimum*), Amphibious Bistort (*Polygonum amphibium*) and the alga *Chaetomorpha incrassata*. On the sheltered western and south-eastern shores of the lake some areas of reedswamp, wet grassland and wet woodland are 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: Shoveler and Coot. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands and, as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.

Lough Rea is of considerable ornithological interest. Nationally important numbers of Shoveler overwinter at the site (264); numbers of this species at the site have exceeded the international threshold level on two occasions in recent years (2002/03 and 2006/07). Nationally important numbers of Coot (1,172) also occur. A further 10 species of waterfowl reach regionally or locally important numbers - all population sizes are the mean of peak counts for the five years, 1995/96-1999/2000.

Lough Rea is an important ornithological site for the nationally important populations of Shoveler and Coot and the regionally/locally important populations of a further ten species that it holds.

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