

## **SITE SYNOPSIS**

**SITE NAME: ARDBOLINE ISLAND AND HORSE ISLAND SPA**

**SITE CODE: 004135**

Ardboline Island and Horse Island are two small marine islands located approximately 500 m from the mainland at Dooneragh Point in Co. Sligo. The islands support short coastal grassland and are underlain by Carboniferous limestone, which is exposed at low tide as intertidal reef. The surrounding seas to a distance of 200m and an area of marine water between the two islands, where seabirds forage, bathe and socialise 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: Cormorant and Barnacle Goose.

Ardboline Island and Horse Island SPA is an important site for breeding seabirds. A Cormorant colony of national importance (179 pairs in 1999) occurs and Herring Gull (11 pairs in 1999), and Great Black-backed Gull (16 pairs in 1999) also breed. In 2008 Eider (1 pair) and Shelduck (1 pair) were also recorded breeding here. Common Tern formerly bred on both islands. The islands are also a wintering site for the internationally important Barnacle Goose flock from the adjacent mainland; this flock can number up to 3,000 individuals (as in 2008) and the birds use the islands for feeding, roosting and refuge.

The site is important as a haul-out for Grey Seal which also breeds here (14 pups recorded in 2005); this species is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

Ardboline Island and Horse Island SPA is of considerable conservation significance for its breeding Cormorant colony and its Barnacle Goose population, the latter a species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Corncrake, also an Annex I species, has been recorded on the islands (3 individuals in 2006).

10.11.2008