

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: CROSS LOUGH (KILLADOON) SPA

SITE CODE: 004212

Cross Lough is located near Killadoon village, approximately 12 km south-west of Louisburgh, in Co. Mayo. Cross Lough is a fine example of a freshwater coastal lake which, at times, may become slightly saline (4 ppt salinity was measured in 1990). The lake lies on muddy sand above the foreshore, behind a shingle and boulder bar. In certain years, a tidal channel connects Cross Lough to the sea, but this has been closed in recent times.

This site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Sandwich Tern.

Aquatic plants present include Spiked Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) and Stoneworts (*Chara* spp.). Beds of Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*) and Sea Club-rush (*S. maritimus*) fringe the lakeshore, with Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*) and Amphibious Bistort (*Polygonum amphibium*) also present. In places, this vegetation merges landward into a swamp dominated by Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). Patches of reedbed occur along the southern lakeshore, formed by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), along with Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) and Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*).

Cross Lough is the former site of a long-established Sandwich Tern colony (107 pairs in 1984 and 70 pairs in 1995), which was located on a small islet within the lake. In recent years the terns have not used this site but terns are known to abandon breeding sites for several years and then return to the site again if conditions are favourable. Black-headed Gull also breeds (70 pairs in 1995) and there are small numbers of breeding Common Gull (c.10 pairs).

Cross Lough (Killadoon) SPA is of conservation significance for Sandwich Tern, a species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.