

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: LOUGH CONN AND LOUGH CULLIN SPA**

**SITE CODE: 004228**

Lough Conn and Lough Cullin are situated in north Co. Mayo and are connected by a narrow inlet near Pontoon. The main inflowing rivers to Lough Conn are the Deel, the Addergoole and the Castlehill while the main outflowing river from Lough Cullin is the River Moy. The lakes have a number of small islands. Fringing swamp vegetation occurs in some sheltered areas. Both Lough Conn and Lough Cullin are part of an important salmonid fishery.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Greenland White-fronted Goose, Tufted Duck, Common Scoter and Common Gull. 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 Conn and Lough Cullin is one of only four breeding sites in the country for Common Scoter, which in Ireland is at the south-west end of its European range. A survey in 1995 recorded 31 pairs, however, a survey in 1999 gave a total of 30 birds for both lakes, comprising 5 pairs, 18 unpaired males and 2 unpaired females.

Lough Conn and Lough Cullin is of importance for wintering waterfowl, with a nationally important population of Tufted Duck (428) - all figures are mean peaks for four of the five winters in the period 1995/96 to 1999/2000. The lakes attract other species in lesser numbers, including Mute Swan (110), Whooper Swan (23), Wigeon (207), Teal (108), Mallard (95), Pochard (182), Coot (464), Golden Plover (177), Goldeneye (87), Lapwing (290), Cormorant (17), Curlew (92) and Great Crested Grebe (6). Lough Conn is also one of the sites utilised by a population of Greenland White-fronted Goose (123 - five year mean peak for the flock during the period 1994/95 to 1998/99). The geese feed mainly on Annagh Island and at a shoreline site near Cloonaghmore Point (95 - five year mean peak for the geese recorded within the SPA during the period 1994/95 to 1998/99).

Lough Conn is a traditional breeding site for gulls and terns. In 1977, Black-headed Gull (*c.* 1,000 individuals) and Common Gull (70 individuals) were recorded. A recent survey in 2000 recorded 40 pairs of Common Gull and 10 pairs of Lesser Black-backed Gull. The Common Gull colony is of national importance. Both Common Tern and Arctic Tern bred in 1984 (42 and 10 pairs respectively on Lough Conn and 4 pairs of either Arctic/Common Tern on Lough Cullin). There were no records of either species breeding at this site in the 1995 national tern survey but a survey in 2000 recorded 1 pair of Common Tern breeding on Lough Conn.

Lough Conn and Lough Cullin is one of only four areas in the country where Common Scoter breed. The site also supports a good diversity of wintering

waterfowl species, including Greenland White-fronted Goose and a nationally important population of Tufted Duck. The occurrence of Greenland White-fronted Goose, Whooper Swan and Golden Plover is of note as these species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Part of the Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA is a Wildfowl Sanctuary.

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