

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BALLYNAFAGH LAKE

SITE CODE: 001387

Ballynafagh Lake is located about 2 km north-west of Prosperous in Co. Kildare. It is a shallow alkaline lake with patches of emergent vegetation in the middle as well as around the shore. Submerged plants include Starwort (*Callitriche* spp.) and Bladderwort (*Utricularia minor*), with Duckweed (*Lemna minor*) and the liverwort *Riccocarpus natans* occurring on the surface.

Alkaline fen vegetation occurs at the lake edge, notably a plant community dominated by Blunt-flowered Rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*) and Black-bog Rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), with frequent Sedges (*Carex lepidocarpa*, *C. rostrata*). Other species in this area include Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Red Rattle (*Pedicularis palustris*), Arrow Grass (*Triglochin palustre*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*). Extensive stands of Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Bulrush and Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) occur around the open water. A stand of Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) occurs in the western corner.

The lake is surrounded by acid grassland, heath and bog. Here the vegetation includes Bent Grass (*Agrostis tenuis*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). Wet woodland of Birch (*Betula* spp.), Willow (*Salix* spp.) and Alder (*Alnus* spp.) occurs in the north-west corner of the lake.

The Blackwood Feeder connects Ballynafagh Lake to the Grand Canal and is of particular conservation significance for the populations of two rare snail species, *Vertigo moulinsiana* and *Pisidium pseudosphaerium*, that it supports. The former species is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, while the latter has previously been recorded only from sites along the Royal Canal. *Vertigo moulinsiana* also occurs in wetland vegetation by Ballynafagh Lake itself. A high diversity of molluscan species is found on the site (42 species recorded in 1997).

A wide diversity of insects is also found at Ballynafagh Lake, including the Marsh Fritillary butterfly, a species listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive.

Breeding birds of the lake include Little Grebe, Mallard, Moorhen, Coot, Snipe and Water Rail. In May 1993 a pair of Curlew was observed holding territory. Sedge Warbler, Reed Bunting and Whitethroat breed within the site. Black-headed Gulls formerly bred at the lake but only single birds were observed in 1993. Wintering waterfowl include: Whooper Swan 20, Teal 114, Mallard 110, Golden Plover 40 and Curlew 117 (all counts average peaks, 1 season 1984/85 - 86/87). The main landuse of the lake is fishing. There is a No Shooting Area Order on the site.

Although originally a reservoir, Ballynafagh Lake has developed a very natural vegetation with some interesting plant communities, including alkaline fen, a habitat that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site supports a high diversity of molluscan species, with some rare species recorded, including *Vertigo moulinsiana*, a species that is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site is also of ornithological importance.