

APPENDIX 2

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Appendix 2 Criteria for assessing Site Evaluation

Rating Qualifying Criteria

A Internationally important

Sites designated (or qualifying for designation) as SAC* or SPA* under the EU Habitats or Birds Directives.

Undesignated sites containing good examples of Annex I priority habitats under the EU Habitats Directive.

Major salmon river fisheries.

Major salmonid (salmon, trout or char) lake fisheries.

B Nationally important

Sites or waters designated or proposed as an NHA* or statutory Nature Reserves.

Undesignated sites containing good examples of Annex I habitats (under EU Habitats Directive).

Undesignated sites containing significant numbers of resident or regularly occurring populations of Annex II species under the EU Habitats Directive or Annex I species under the EU Birds Directive or species protected under the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000.

Major trout river fisheries.

Water bodies with major amenity fishery value.

Commercially important coarse fisheries.

C High value, locally important

Sites containing semi-natural habitat types with high biodiversity in a local context and a high degree of naturalness, or significant populations of locally rare species.

Small water bodies with known salmonid populations or with good potential salmonid habitat.

Sites containing any resident or regularly occurring populations of Annex II species under the EU Habitats Directive or Annex I species under the EU Birds Directive.

Large water bodies with some coarse fisheries value.

D Moderate value, locally important

Sites containing some semi-natural habitat or locally important for wildlife.

Small water bodies with some coarse fisheries value or some potential salmonid habitat.

Any water body with unpolluted water (Q-value rating 4-5).

E Low value, locally important

Artificial or highly modified habitats with low species diversity and low wildlife value.

Water bodies with no current fisheries value and no significant potential fisheries value.

*SAC = Special Area of Conservation

SPA = Special Protection Area

NHA = Natural Heritage Area

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APPENDIX 3

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SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BROADHAVEN BAY

SITE CODE: 000472

Broadhaven Bay is a large, north facing bay situated on the north-west Mayo coast. The site extends from the innermost part of the bay at Belmullet to the outer marine area between Erris Head and Benwee Head. At its outermost part, the site is 10 km wide. Exposure to prevailing winds and wave action diminishes from the mouth toward the head of the bay. Subsidiary inlets along the length of the bay provide further areas of additional shelter.

Broadhaven Bay encompasses a range of marine and coastal habitats from extremely exposed bedrock at Benwee Head to sheltered sediments in the inner bay. There are good examples of wave-surged cave communities in shallow water with the anemone *Phellia gausapata* typically found in areas very exposed to wave action. A cave in deeper water supports colonies of the rare anemone *Parazoanthus anguicomus* and the soft coral *Alcyonium glomeratum*. The subtidal reef communities in the outer part of the bay are good examples of the zonation from kelp forest in shallow water to kelp park with an understudy of foliose brown algae and to the sponge communities in deeper water. Species richness can be high (up to 72 species) and the widely distributed but uncommon crab *Pirimela denticulata*, and hydroid *Tamarisca tamarisca* were both found at one site. In deeper water the reef communities are characterised by the Axinellid sponge community, communities tolerant of sand scour and communities typical of vertical or steeply sloping bedrock. A range of sublittoral sediments occurs within the site with sediment in the outer part of the bay characterised by bivalves or the burrowing urchin *Echinocardium cordatum*. Seagrass (*Zostera marina*) occurs in more sheltered areas and the oyster *Ostrea edulis* may be present. The inner part of the bay has extensive areas of intertidal mud characterised by polychaete communities or muddy sand which support communities of polychaetes and bivalves, typical for these substrates.

Salt marshes occur in the very sheltered areas at Tallagh and Barnatra. These are fringe marshes on peat and typical of the Atlantic salt meadow type. Species present include Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Sea Arrowgrass (*Triglochin maritima*), Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*), Common Salt-marsh Grass (*Puccinellia maritima*), and the rushes *Juncus gerardii* and *Juncus maritimus*. Turf fucoids occur.

Inishderry, a small island in the inner bay, supports important numbers of breeding terns, with Sandwich Tern (81 pairs in 1995) and Common and Arctic Terns (42 pairs in 1995). The rare Little Tern has bred in the past. The island also has breeding Black-headed Gulls (100 individuals in 1995).

Broadhaven Bay is an important area for wintering waterfowl, being part of a large complex that includes the Mullet and Blacksod Bay. Based on average peak counts over the five winters 1994/95 to 1998/99 the following species have nationally

important populations: Red-breasted Merganser (38), Ringed Plover (484), Grey Plover (52), Sanderling (74), Dunlin (2,108) and Bar-tailed Godwit (484). In some winters Brent Goose numbers exceed the threshold of 200 for national and international importance. Regionally important numbers of a number of other species occur: Oystercatcher, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Knot, Curlew, Redshank and Turnstone.

This site is of high conservation importance owing to the presence of several habitats that are listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive: large shallow bays; intertidal sand flats, reefs, marine caves and salt marshes. In addition it has ornithological importance for breeding and wintering birds.

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3.9.2001

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: MULLET/BLACKSOD BAY COMPLEX

SITE CODE: 000470

This large coastal site, located in north-west Mayo, comprises much of the Mullet Peninsula, the sheltered waters of Blacksod Bay and the low-lying sandy coastline from Belmullet to Kinrovar. The character of the site is strongly influenced by the Atlantic Ocean and the exposed location of much of the site results in a terrestrial landscape dominated by blown sand and largely devoid of trees. The underlying bedrock is principally metamorphic schist and gneiss. The site displays an excellent range of coastal and marine habitats.

The site is a candidate SAC selected for fixed dune, machair and decalcified dune heath all priority habitats on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site is also selected as a candidate SAC for other habitats listed on Annex I of the directive – alkaline fen, eutrophic lake, reefs, Marram dunes, large shallow inlet and bay, tidal mudflats and *Salicornia* mudflats. In addition, the site is also selected as a candidate SAC for the liverwort, Petalwort and the Otter, a plant and animal species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

Blacksod Bay is 16 km in length and 8 km wide at the mouth. It is a shallow bay, reaching a maximum depth of 19 m and with weak tidal streams. The bay has a good range of representative littoral and sublittoral sediment communities and also infralittoral reefs.

The littoral sediments of the bay consist of areas that are moderately exposed to, or very sheltered from, wave action. Characteristically, exposed to moderately exposed sediment communities are composed of coarse to fine sand and have a polychaete fauna with crustaceans. Species richness increases as conditions become more sheltered. Talitrid amphipods occur in decomposing seaweed on the strand line. Polychaete worms (*Arenicola marina*), bivalves (*Cerastoderma edule*) and crustaceans, such as *Urothoe brevicornis*, *Ampelisca brevicornis*, and *Bathyporeia pilosa*, are common in the middle shore.

The sublittoral sediment towards the entrance of the bay is comprised of rather barren medium sand with the occasional bivalve molluscs *Glycymeris glycymeris* and *Ensis* spp. Much of the sediment in the centre of the bay is composed of firm, muddy sand with the brittle stars *Amphiura* spp. and the razor shells *Ensis* spp. Towards the head of the bay the sediment is composed of muddy sand with *Turritella communis*, *Amphiura brachiata* and *Philine aperta* and soft sandy mud with *Anthopleura balli* and decaying algae. In some areas the sea grass *Zostera marina* and the reef forming polychaete *Serpula vermiculata* are frequent. Notable species included Oyster (*Ostrea edulis*), which occurs at head of the bay, and the sea anemone *Phellia gausapata*, which is present in the middle of the bay.

Infralittoral reefs within Blacksod Bay are sheltered or very sheltered from wave action and subject to weak or moderate tidal streams. In sheltered areas that are composed of bedrock, occasional *Saccorhiza polyschides* overlie a rich assemblage of red algal species such as *Dudresnaya verticillata*, *Heterosiphonia plumosa* and *Chondria tenuissima*. Very sheltered bedrock reef communities are also characterized by foliose red algae. The sea anemone, *Metridium senile*, is abundant on the tops of the reefs and *Antedon bifida* on the steeper surfaces. Much of the infralittoral reef in Blacksod Bay is composed of boulders, cobbles and pebbles. The red algae in these areas are sand-tolerant species such as *Chondria dasphylla* and *Gracilaria gracilis*. Characterizing faunal species are the anthozoans *Metridium senile* and *Alcyonium digitatum*, the hydroid *Nemertesia ramosa* and the sponge *Dysidea fragilis*. The purple sea urchin, *Paracentrotus lividus*, occurs at two sites at the head of the bay.

Large areas of machair, a priority habitat on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive, are found within this extensive coastal site. On the Mullet peninsula the habitat is best developed to the west of Termoncarragh lake, Tonamace/Macecrump and to the west of Cross Lough. On the eastern shores of Blacksod Bay, extensive areas of machair occur at Doolough, Srah and Dooyork. The vegetation of the habitat is dominated by plant species of dry dune grassland which include Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Wild Thyme (*Thymus praecox*), Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Ribwort-Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Sand Sedge (*Carex arenaria*) and Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*). The main moss species are *Brachythecium albicans*, *Calliargon cuspidatum* and *Bryum* species. In damper areas of machair the vegetation is transitional to fen and contains, in addition to the typical dry machair species, such species as Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*), Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) and Grass-of-parnassis (*Parnassia palustris*).

Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation, another Annex I priority habitat, have an extensive distribution throughout the site and are particularly well developed in the middle and south of the Mullet peninsula, e.g. Emlybeg, Newtown, Agleam. Areas of fixed dunes are typically at their highest c. 500 metres back from the sea and at Emlybeg and Newtown they attain a height of approximately 33 metres. The fixed dunes areas present within the site often form a complex mosaic with other dune habitats such as shifting dunes and machair. Frequent plant species recorded in the habitat include Marram Grass (*Ammophila arenaria*), Smooth Meadow-grass (*Poa pratensis*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*) and Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*). The moss cover is well developed and includes *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, *Hypnum cupressiforme*, *Tortula ruralis* and *Homalothecium lutescens*. The conspicuous lichen *Peltigera canina* is also occasionally encountered in the vegetation. At Nakil, on the southern tip of the peninsula, there is a fine example of decalcified fixed dunes. In this habitat, there is a range of heath species such as Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bell Heath (*Erica cinerea*), Sheep's Fescue (*Festuca ovina*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succissa pratensis*), along with dune species such as Sand Sedge (*Carex arenaria*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*) and Wild Thyme (*Thymus praecox*).

Smaller areas of shifting dunes with Marram (*Ammophila arenaria*) are found in most of the dune areas within the site and typically occur along the most exposed ridges of

sand dune systems. The vegetation is species-poor and generally sparse. Along with Marram, typical plant species include Mayweed (*Matricaria maritima*), Sea Holly (*Eryngium maritimum*), Colt's-foot (*Tussilago farfara*) and the locally rare Sea Bindweed (*Calystegia soldanella*).

Salt marshes occur in a number of places, notably at Elly Bay, Sallee Harbour, Bunnahowen, Doolough and Gweesalia. Typical species include Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Salt-marsh Grass (*Puccinellia maritima*), Sea Aster (*Aster trifolium*), Sea Milkwort (*Glaux maritima*), Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*) and Saltmarsh Rush (*Juncus gerardi*). At the lower levels of the marshes, and in places extending onto the open sand flats, there occurs Glasswort (*Salicornia europaea* agg.) and Seablite (*Suaeda maritima*).

The site also includes shallow freshwater lakes, Termoncarragh Lough, Cross Lough and Leam Lough. Cross Lough is a good example of a naturally eutrophic lake. The water of the lake appears to have a permanent turbid, yellow-brown colour and is unusual in that the phytoplankton is dominated by *Spirulina* spp. and other unusual cyanobacteria. The waters of the lake have a high chloride content (118 mg/l) and a relatively high calcium content (16 mg/l). The western shore of the lake is sandy and tends to be dominated by the stonewort *Chara aspera* with some Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*). Other aquatic plant species which have been recorded from the lake include Spiked Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), Long-stalked Pondweed (*Potamogeton praelongus*), Slender-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton filiformis*) and Fennel Pondweed (*Potamogeton pectinatus*).

Marsh and swamp vegetation is well developed around Termoncarragh Lough, and of particular note is a fine example of alkaline fen. This is species-rich, with such fen plants as Jointed Rush (*Juncus articulatus*), Glaucous Sedge (*Carex flacca*), Grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*), Knotted Pearlwort (*Sagina nodosa*), Marsh Arrowgrass (*Triglochin palustris*), Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) and Lesser Clubmoss (*Selaginella selaginoides*). The scarce Marsh helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*) also occurs. A feature of the fen is a strong maritime influence, with the presence of a number of salt marsh species such as Sea Milkwort (*Glaux maritima*), Buck's-horn Plantain (*Plantago coronopus*), and Sea Arrowgrass (*Triglochin maritima*).

The Annex II liverwort species *Petalophyllum ralfsii* has been recently recorded from damp areas of machair at Doolough and Dooyork. The Red Data Book plant species Narrow-leaved Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza traunsteineri*) also occurs. Otter is well distributed throughout the site.

This site has high ornithological importance, with seven Annex I Bird Directive species occurring regularly in winter and a further two as rare breeders. Blacksod Bay provides ideal habitat for divers (all given counts are average maxima over the three winters 1994/95 to 1996/97), with Great Northern Diver (64) occurring in numbers of international importance and Red-throated Divers (45) in significant numbers. The site is an important wintering area for an internationally important population of Barnacle Geese (400-500), and also populations of Greenland White-fronted Geese (56) and Whooper Swans (95). Golden Plover are regular in small numbers (c.700),

while a nationally important population of Bar-tailed Godwits (552) occur. Little Tern has bred in small numbers in the past, while the site is well known for one of Ireland's rarest breeding birds, the Red-necked Phalarope. Unfortunately this species may now be extinct as a breeding species.

A wide range of other wintering birds occur. Of particular note are Brent Geese (212) and Ringed Plover (524), both of which have internationally important populations. A further six species have populations of national importance: Common Scoter (642), Red-breasted Merganser (50), Grey Plover (60), Knot (342), Sanderling (58) and Dunlin (2,601). The site is also notable for its breeding waders, with very important concentrations of Dunlin (26 pairs in 1996) and Lapwing (43 pairs in 1996), and significant numbers of Snipe (12 pairs) and Ringed Plover (5 pairs).

High levels of grazing and associated agricultural practices, e.g. feeding of stock and fertilisation, has already resulted in locally severe damage to areas of dune and machair. The damage has been intensified by the recent division of dune and machair commonage, which is particularly evident on the Mullet. These agricultural activities remain serious threats. Benthic communities are very vulnerable to bottom-fishing gear such as that used for fishing oysters, and this is thought to be the most damaging activity in the marine area. Bait digging is potentially damaging to littoral sediment communities if the areas are over-fished.

This site is of high importance for the range of marine and coastal habitats, many of which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, three having priority status. The Annex II species *Petalophyllum ralfsii* also occurs. The site is also of particular ornithological importance, having four wintering species with internationally important populations and also important concentrations of breeding waders.

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16.06.2003

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SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BLACKSOD BAY/BROADHAVEN SPA

SITE CODE: 004037

Situated in the extreme north-west of Co. Mayo, this site comprises all of the inner part of Broadhaven Bay and the various sheltered bays and inlets in Blacksod Bay, including Trawmore Bay, Saleen Harbour, Elly Harbour and Tullaghan Bay. At low tide extensive areas of intertidal sand and mudflats are exposed. These support a well-developed macro-invertebrate fauna. Talitrid amphipods occur in decomposing seaweed on the strand line, whilst polychaete worms (*Arenicola marina*), bivalves (*Cerastoderma edule*) and crustaceans, such as *Urothoe brevicornis*, *Ampelisca brevicornis* and *Bathyporeia pilosa*, are common in the middle shore. Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) occurs at several localities. Salt marshes, which are often on a peat substrate, fringe parts of the site and provide useful roosts for the wintering waterfowl. Species typically present include Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Common saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*), Sea Aster (*Aster trifolium*), Sea Milkwort (*Glaux maritima*), Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*) and Saltmarsh Rush (*Juncus gerardi*). At the lower levels of the marshes, and in places extending onto the open sand flats, are found Glasswort (*Salicornia europaea* agg.) and Seablite (*Suaeda maritima*). Sandy and shingle beaches are well represented. A small island, Inishderry, situated in the inner part of the bay, is used by nesting terns and gulls. The underlying bedrock consists mainly of schists and gneiss.

The site supports an excellent diversity of wintering waterfowl species and is one of the most important wetland complexes in the west. It has nationally important populations of Great Northern Diver (31), Red-breasted Merganser (48), Bar-tailed Godwit (441), Ringed Plover (332) and Dunlin (1,709) - figures are average peaks for the 5 seasons 1995/96-1999/00. It also supports Red-throated Diver (15), Brent Goose (149), Oystercatcher (262), Golden Plover (267), Grey Plover (53), Knot (234), Sanderling (53), Curlew (330), Redshank (96), Turnstone (38), Shelduck (26), Mallard (55), Cormorant (29), Black-headed Gull (183) and Common Gull (161). It provides both feeding and roosting areas for the birds though some species may also utilise marginal habitats above the shoreline for feeding and/or roosting, as well as the shallow marine waters elsewhere in Blacksod Bay.

Inishderry Island has a nationally important breeding colony of Sandwich Tern, with 160-170 pairs present in 1994 and 81 pairs in 1995. The terns at this site are considered to be the same population that nested at Carrowmore Lake in the past. It also has nesting Common Tern and Arctic Tern (total for the two species of 42 pairs), and a colony of Black-headed Gull (100 individuals in 1995). Little Tern has also bred in small numbers in the past.

There are no serious imminent threats to the various bird populations. Aquaculture occurs and intensification could cause disturbance to the birds and their habitats. Some of the salt marshes have suffered damage due to heavy grazing by sheep, and

remain vulnerable.

This site is of high ornithological importance for its excellent diversity of wintering waterfowl and for the nationally important populations of five species that it supports. Of particular note is the usage of the site by over 3% of the national Ringed Plover population. It is also of importance as a breeding site for terns and gulls, especially the localised Sandwich Tern. It is of note that seven of the species that occur regularly are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, i.e. Great Northern Diver, Red-throated Diver, Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Sandwich Tern, Common Tern and Arctic Tern.

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30.3.2005

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: ERRIS HEAD

SITE CODE: 001501

This site is situated on the northern part of the Mullet Peninsula in north Mayo. It comprises approximately 15 km of cliff plus adjoining habitats. The geology of the region consists of acid rocks, such as quartzite, gneiss and Silurian schists and slates.

The sea cliffs, which represent a habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive, are very exposed and subject to very high rainfall. They are of moderate height, reaching a maximum of about 90 m in the north-east. Aspect is predominantly north-facing. There is little information available on the vegetation of the cliffs but the known presence of species such as Roseroot (*Rhodiola rosea*) and Rock Sea-spurrey (*Spergularia rupicola*) suggest that there is a fairly typical cliff vegetation for such an exposed site. An area of sea, which extends 200 m from the base of the cliffs, forms part of the site. This is included mainly to provide added protection for the cliff-nesting seabirds.

A notable habitat found at this site is alpine heath, which occurs inland from the tops of the sea cliffs. Alpine heath is listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Typical heath species present include Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) and Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*). The alpine heath is considered to be of good quality.

The alpine heath grades into a coastal grassland in places, and coastal grassland forms the main terrestrial habitat at the southern part of the site. Other habitats present include wet heath and flushes. Here, plant species present include Blunt-flowered Rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*), Marsh Helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*) and three types of Sundew (*Drosera* spp.).

The site is of ornithological importance for a number of species. Chough frequents the site and in 1992 nine pairs were recorded breeding. Peregrine Falcon also breeds, while small numbers (<20) of Barnacle Goose utilise the grasslands in winter. These three species are of note as they are listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive. There is a scattering of breeding seabirds though no major colonies. The main seabirds which breed are Fulmar (50-100 pairs, 1970) and Great Black-backed Gull (38 pairs, 1970).

Grey Seals may be seen feeding below the cliffs, while on land two Red Data Book species, the Irish Hare and the Common Frog, are among the more notable animals which occur.

Landuse at the site consists mainly of sheep grazing, which appears not to be excessive. The area is also a popular location for tourists, especially those interested in walking.

This site is of conservation importance primarily for the cliff and alpine heath habitats, both of which are listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. The presence of several Annex I Bird Directive species and some breeding seabirds adds to the interest of the site.

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31.3.2002

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: TERMONCARRAGH LAKE AND ANNAGH MACHAIR SPA

SITE CODE: 004093

Termoncarragh Lake is a shallow, coastal lake situated on the north-west side of the Mullet peninsula, Co. Mayo. It is fringed by swamp vegetation and edged in parts by freshwater marsh and fen. The fen is species-rich and includes such species as Jointed Rush (*Juncus articulatus*), Glaucous Sedge (*Carex flacca*), Grass-of-Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*), Knotted Pearlwort (*Sagina nodosa*), Marsh Arrowgrass (*Triglochin palustris*), Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) and Lesser Clubmoss (*Selaginella selaginoides*). The scarce Marsh Helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*) also occurs. The lake habitats merge into a machair plain which is now mostly divided into strip fields. The vegetation of the machair is typified by such species as Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Wild Thyme (*Thymus praecox*), Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Sand Sedge (*Carex arenaria*) and Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*). Some low sand hills occur between the machair and the sea. The innermost part of Portnafrankagh Bay is included in the site. The site is underlain by Moinian schists.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Barnacle Goose, Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Corncrake, Chough, Lapwing and Dunlin. 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.

Termoncarragh Lake and Annagh machair is of high importance for both wintering and breeding birds. It is part of the wintering ground for the largest Barnacle Goose population in the country, and regularly supports a flock of international importance (the average peak for 4 of the 5 seasons in the 1995/96-1999/00 period was 394 individuals). The centre of the population is the Inishkea Islands and, as well as the Mullet, the birds use Duvillaun More and Inishkerragh/Inishglora. The site is important for passage Whooper Swan, with up to 300 individuals visiting the site in autumn and spring. The site supports a range of other wintering species, including Greenland White-fronted Goose (11), Golden Plover (405), Teal (38), Mallard (47) and Ringed Plover (20), as well as the resident Mute Swan (39).

The marginal wetland habitats and the machair are prime habitats for breeding waders. A survey in 1996 recorded the following: Lapwing (22 pairs), Dunlin (14 pairs) and Snipe (5 pairs). The site is one of the most important areas in the country for breeding Dunlin. The area was well known as the main breeding site for Red-necked Phalarope but breeding has not been recorded in recent years. The reason for the abandonment of the site by the birds may be habitat change. During the breeding season Corncrake have been recorded here, albeit in low numbers. Post-fledgling Chough flocks of up to 30 individuals regularly occur at the site between August and October.

Agricultural intensification, associated with fencing and division of the machair and subsequent overgrazing by cattle and sheep, has degraded part of the site. Some areas formerly suitable for nesting waders have become overgrown with vegetation.

Part of site is owned by BirdWatch Ireland who have recently commenced a management programme to improve habitat conditions for breeding waders, including Red-necked Phalarope and Corncrake.

The site is of high ornithological importance, supporting as it does an internationally important Barnacle Goose population. It is also a prime site for breeding waders, notably Dunlin. It is hoped that the on-going habitat management programme for Red-necked Phalarope will encourage the return of the species to the site. Of note is that several of the species which occur regularly are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, i.e. Barnacle Goose, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Whooper Swan, Golden Plover, Dunlin, Corncrake and Chough.

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