

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT UPPER LOUGH ERNE - GALLOON, COUNTY FERMANAGH. ARTICLE 24 OF THE NATURE CONSERVATION AND AMENITY LANDS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1985

The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland (the Department), having consulted the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside and being satisfied that the area delineated and described on the attached map (the area) is of special scientific interest by reason of the flora and fauna and accordingly needs to be specially protected, hereby declares the area to be an area of special scientific interest to be known as the 'Upper Lough Erne - Galloon area of special scientific interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of the flora and fauna. It is in the southern part of Upper Lough Erne, of which it is an integral element. The area includes the open waters of the lough, in addition to a range of associated wetland and other communities within the adjoining drumlin landscape of County Fermanagh. Galloon is especially well characterised by the extent and quality of the grasslands, many of which are managed in the traditional way and are rich in plant species. There is a diverse range of plant and animal communities, with notable transitions from open water to drier ground and important concentrations of both individual species and groups of species.

The open waters of the main lough and smaller satellite loughs contain a variety of aquatic species, including Yellow Water-lily Nuphar lutea, and a number of Pondweeds, such as Broad-leaved Pondweed Potamogeton natans and Shining Pondweed P. lucens. The nationally rare Frogbit Hydrocharis morsus-ranae, a scarce plant in the British Isles, is also notably frequent in the area.

Depending on the degree of exposure to wind and wave action, the open waters often give way to a swamp zone, which is dominated by the dense growth of tall grass and grass-like species such as Common Reed Phragmites australis and Common Club-rush Schoenoplectus lacustris. This is particularly common in the relatively sheltered conditions in the area. Exposed shores are less frequent here than in other parts of the lough and tend to have more open swamp communities, with Water Horsetail Equisetum fluviatile and Common Spike-rush Eleocharis palustris prominent.

Behind the swamp zone is an area of fen, where sedges are the main component of the vegetation, particularly Tufted-sedge Carex elata and Bottle Sedge C. rostrata. This zone is often species-rich, with a wide range of associated herbs, including such scarce species as Cowbane Cicuta virosa, Greater Water-parsnip Sium latifolium and Flowering-rush Butomus umbellatus, in addition to more common plants like Water-plantain Alisma plantago-aquatica and Purple Loosestrife Lythrum salicaria.

Where the shoreline is grazed, there is often a transition to wet grassland, which may be very variable in species content. In general, grasses and rushes are dominant here, especially Creeping Bent Agrostis stolonifera, Soft Rush Juncus effusus and Hard Rush J. inflexus, with a range of herbs such as Creeping-Jenny Lysimachia nummularia, Marsh Pennywort Hydrocotyle vulgaris, Lesser Spearwort Ranunculus flammula and Creeping Buttercup R. repens. Where flushing by more base-rich waters occurs, a sward dominated by sedges such as Glaucous Sedge Carex flacca and Carnation Sedge C. panicea may be found.

Wet woodland is found where the shoreline is ungrazed or only very lightly grazed. This is generally characterised by a canopy in which species such as Willow Salix spp. and Alder Alnus glutinosa are dominant, with more notable species such as Aspen Populus tremula, Guelder-rose Viburnum opulus and Buckthorn Rhamnus cathartica scattered throughout. The ground flora beneath this often resembles that of the swamp and fen zone.

In addition, the area is notable for the extent of its species-rich grasslands. Due to a combination of the mild but wet climate and the base-rich gleyed soils, the grasslands associated with the less intensively farmed areas tend to have a high proportion of rushes, sedges and herbs growing within the sward. With light grazing, the vegetation is generally dominated by a tall growth of species such as Sharp-flowered Rush Juncus acutiflorus and Carnation Sedge Carex panicea, with a variety of other rushes and grasses. Herbs tend to be either tall and robust, or climbing species, and are characterised by plants such as Common Knapweed Centaurea nigra, Common Spotted-orchid Dactylorhiza fuchsii, Meadow Vetchling Lathyrus pratensis, Marsh Ragwort Senecio aquaticus, Meadowsweet Filipendula ulmaria, Silverweed Potentilla anserina and Common Fleabane Pulicaria dysenterica. With different management and soil conditions, the grasslands can display a wide range of variation. In strongly flushed conditions, a community dominated by short sedges is present. This is characterised by Flea Sedge Carex pulicaris, Yellow-sedge C. viridula ssp. oedocarpa and Tawny Sedge C. hostiana. Jointed Rush Juncus articulatus and Quaking Grass Briza media are also prominent, with a diverse range of herbs including Devil's-bit Scabious Succisa pratensis, Common Bird's-foot Trefoil Lotus corniculatus, and the rare Blue-eyed-grass Sisyrinchium bermudiana. On lighter, more freely-draining soils where the vegetation is regularly mown, herb-rich meadows are present. Here the vegetation is characterised by Yellow-rattle Rhinanthus minor, Oxeye Daisy Leucanthemum vulgare, Tufted Vetch Vicia cracca, Sneezewort Achillea ptarmica and Changing Forget-me-not Myosotis discolor. On well-drained, but more acidic soils, Meadow Thistle Cirsium dissectum and Purple Moor-grass Molinia caerulea are prominent species in the sward.

The area contains many vascular plants with a restricted distribution in the British Isles. In addition to some of those listed above, rare plants include Arrowhead Sagittaria sagittifolia growing in the open water, Marsh Pea Lathyrus palustris, Needle Spike-rush Eleocharis acicularis and Elongated Sedge Carex elongata from the swamp and fen, and the woodland species Thin-spiked Wood-sedge Carex strigosa.

Otters Lutra lutra are known to frequent the area.

Galloon contains significant numbers of bird species. The open waters attract wintering wildfowl, including Mute Swan Cygnus olor, Teal Anas crecca, Wigeon Anas penelope and Goldeneye Bucephala clangula. In summer, wet grasslands support breeding waders, including Snipe Gallinago gallinago, Lapwing Vanellus vanellus and Curlew Numenius arquata.

Although still relatively poorly known, the invertebrate communities of the Upper Lough Erne basin are notable. As the main body of Upper Lough Erne and many of the satellite lakes are eutrophic, the aquatic fauna is frequently dominated by common lowland species. However, whilst individual areas may be relatively species-poor, the fauna of the complete system is rich and varied. Amongst the better known groups, there are records of over 70 species of water beetle, 20 species of aquatic Hemiptera and 14 species of dragonfly. A number of these species are found most commonly within Northern Ireland in the Upper Lough Erne area.

In sheltered areas where there are stands of open swamp and fen vegetation, a diverse aquatic fauna is found, with several notable species. Surface-living aquatic insects such as whirligig beetles and pondskaters are frequent in these areas. The most common whirligigs are often Gyrinus paykulli and Gyrinus distinctus, two species which are very rare throughout most of Britain and Ireland. The presence of the Gerrid Limnoporus rufoscutellatus is also significant, as this has rarely been recorded before in Ireland. Other notable aquatic insects recorded in the Upper Lough Erne system are the beetles Hygrotus quinquelineatus, which is characteristic of the large base-rich lakes in Ireland, Noterus crassicornis and Coelambus impressopunctatus and the Hairy Dragonfly Brachytron pratense, for which this area is its Northern Ireland stronghold.

Information is especially scanty for terrestrial groups which depend upon the marginal habitats. However, there are indications that the unimproved meadows are especially rich in ground beetles, with several notable species including the ground beetle Carabus clatratus. Likewise the fauna of the scrub and woodland is largely undocumented. One species for which this habitat is known to be important is the Brimstone butterfly Gonepteryx rhamni. Buckthorn Rhamnus cathartica is the larval foodplant for this butterfly, which establishes breeding populations periodically throughout Upper Lough Erne.

SCHEDULE

The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the flora and fauna of the area:

1. Any activity or operation which involves the damage or disturbance by any means of the surface and subsurface of the land, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing, reclamation and extraction of minerals, including sand, gravel and peat.
2. Any change in the present annual pattern and intensity of grazing, including any change in the type of livestock used or in supplementary feeding practice.
3. Any change in the established method or frequency of rolling, mowing or cutting.
4. Any change in the annual pattern of application of manure, slurry or artificial fertiliser.
5. The application of herbicides, fungicides or other chemicals deployed to kill any form of wild plant, other than plants listed as being noxious in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977.
6. The storage or dumping, spreading or discharge of any material not specified under paragraphs 4 or 5 above.
7. The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant, seed or plant remains, other than for
 - (i) plants listed as noxious in the Noxious Weeds (Northern Ireland) Order 1977;
 - (ii) normal cutting or mowing regimes for which a consent is not required under paragraph 3 above.

8. The release into the area of any animal (other than in connection with normal grazing practice) or plant. 'Animal' includes birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates; 'Plant' includes seed, fruit or spore.
9. Burning.
10. Changes in tree or woodland management, including afforestation, planting, clearing, selective felling and coppicing.
11. Construction, removal or disturbance of any permanent or temporary structure including building, engineering or other operations.
12. Alteration of natural or man-made features, the clearance of boulders or large stones and grading of rock faces.
13. Operations or activities which would affect wetlands (including marsh, fen, bog, rivers, streams and open water), eg
 - (i) change in the methods or frequency of routine drainage maintenance;
 - (ii) modification in the structure of any watercourse;
 - (iii) lowering of the water-table, permanently or temporarily;
 - (iv) change in the management of bank-side vegetation.
14. The killing or taking of any animal in a manner likely to affect the continued existence of the species within the area except as provided for under the terms of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.
15. The following activities undertaken in a manner likely to damage or disturb the wildlife of the area:
 - (i) Educational activities;
 - (ii) Research activities;
 - (iii) Recreational activities;
 - (iv) Exercising of animals.
16. Changes in game, waterfowl or fisheries management or fishing or hunting practices.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
Department of the Environment for
Northern Ireland on 2 February, 1995



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FOOTNOTES

- (a) Please note that consent by the Department to any of the above operations or activities does not constitute planning permission. Where required, planning permission must be applied for in the usual manner to the Department under Part IV of the Planning (NI) Order 1991. Operations or activities covered by planning permission are not normally covered in the list of Notifiable Operations.

- (b) Also note that many of the operations and activities listed above are capable of being carried out either on a large scale or in a very small way. While it is impossible to define exactly what is "large" and what is "small", the Department would intend to approach each case in a common sense and practical way. It is very unlikely that small scale operations would give rise for concern and if this was the case the Department would give consent, particularly if there is a long history of the operation being undertaken in that precise location.

UPPER LOUGH ERNE – GALLOON

Views About Management The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 Article 28(2)

A statement of Environment and Heritage Service's views about the management of Upper Lough Erne - Galloon Area of Special Scientific Interest ("the ASSI")

This statement represents the views of Environment and Heritage Service about the management of the ASSI for nature conservation. This statement sets out, in principle, our views on how the area's special conservation interest can be conserved and enhanced. Environment and Heritage Service has a duty to notify the owners and occupiers of the ASSI of its views about the management of the land.

Not all of the management principles will be equally appropriate to all parts of the ASSI and there may be other management activities, additional to our current views, which can be beneficial to the conservation and enhancement of the features of interest. It is also very important to recognise that management may need to change with time.

The management views set out below do not constitute consent for any operation or activity. The written consent of Environment and Heritage Service is still required before carrying out any operation or activity likely to damage the features of special interest (see the Schedule on pages 3 and 4 for a list of these operations and activities). Environment and Heritage Service welcomes consultation with owners, occupiers and users of the ASSI to ensure that the management of this area maintains and enhances the features of interest, and to ensure that all necessary prior consents are obtained.

MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Natural eutrophic lake

Natural eutrophic lakes have nutrient levels that are higher than those of other types of lakes. As a result of this natural productivity, they are typically species-rich and represent important habitats for wildlife. In their natural state, they are characterised by a rich mixture of aquatic plants. However, many such lakes have been damaged by over-enrichment with nutrients which can lead to a reduction in species-richness. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the habitat and its associated species. These include important invertebrate communities and Otter populations.

Lakes depend on water quantity and quality to maintain their conservation value. They are generally sensitive to disturbance and nutrient enrichment. Sympathetic management practices and recreation around Upper Lough Erne – Galloon have contributed to maintaining this feature of interest.



Specific objectives include:

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance of water quality through the control of pollution and artificial enrichment.

Where possible, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the sympathetic management of water levels to maintain the most favourable water depths throughout the year for the plant and animal species present.

Low intensity agriculture around the ASSI has contributed to the conservation and enhancement of this feature of interest. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance of these practices to ensure that disturbance to the waters, bed and shore of the lakes and their wildlife is minimised.

Environment and Heritage Service recognises the important economic and social roles of fishing and welcomes sustainable fishery management that is sensitive to the special interests of the ASSI.

Species-rich grasslands

Species-rich grasslands are an important habitat for wildlife. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the grassland through the conservation of its associated native plants and animals. These include plants of limited distribution within Northern Ireland and important invertebrate communities.

Many of the more sensitive species can be quickly lost through intensive management treatments, such as fertiliser and herbicide application. However, grassland generally needs some management to retain its interest. Although occasional small patches of scrub can be valuable in providing additional habitat niches for birds and invertebrates, in the absence of management, coarse grasses can quickly take over and ultimately woody species may become dominant.

Grazing by cattle is the most effective way of controlling the growth of more vigorous species and helping to maintain open areas and a diverse sward structure, although overgrazing should be avoided as the wet soils are particularly susceptible to poaching. In the absence of grazing, cutting of the vegetation to create open areas and reduce the dominance of coarse grasses is desirable.

Where cutting for hay, followed by light aftermath cattle grazing, has been traditionally practised this is also an effective way of controlling the growth of more vigorous species and helping to maintain a species-rich sward.

Specific objectives include:

Where low intensity grazing has been practised this has contributed to the conservation and enhancement of the grassland. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the continuation of this practice.

Where cutting for hay followed by light aftermath cattle grazing is traditionally practised this has contributed to the conservation and enhancement of the grassland. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the continuation of this practice.

Maintain the diversity and quality of the species-rich grassland by ensuring there is no application of fertiliser, slurry or herbicide to the site.

Prevent the loss of more sensitive grassland species through the control of scrub, bracken and rushes. In general, this can be achieved through the appropriate grazing regime. In some cases other methods of control, such as cutting, may be required.

Where appropriate, encourage the blocking of drains to prevent the grassland from drying out.

Fens and Swamps

Fens and swamps are important habitats for wildlife. They develop on the fringes of open water and represent a stage in the process of succession from open water to dry land. Swamps often consist of a single dominant plant species (such as reeds, sedges, or bulrushes) with a few other plants growing amongst them whilst fens are often very diverse and rich in species. Upper Lough Erne - Galloon contains a number of different fen and swamp vegetation communities. Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the fen and swamp through the conservation of these communities and their associated native plants and animals. These include plants of limited distribution within Northern Ireland, Otters and important invertebrate communities.

Fen vegetation requires water levels to be at, or just below, the surface all year round, while swamps generally occur in slightly deeper water. Increases in the nutrient status of the water and underlying peat soils can lead to the dominance of species such as Bulrush at the expense of other, more important plant communities. Therefore it is important to maintain good water-quality.

Fen and swamp communities are susceptible to successional change and generally need some management to retain their interest. In the absence of management, coarse grasses such as Common Reed can quickly spread from the swamp into the fen and ultimately woody species may become dominant. Over a period of time, these species may shade out more important plant communities and cause the fen to dry out. Occasional small patches of scrub can be valuable in providing additional habitat niches for birds and invertebrates, but widespread conversion of fen and swamp to wet woodland would generally be undesirable.

Low intensity summer grazing by cattle (or ponies) that are more adaptable to wet conditions is the most effective way of controlling the growth of more vigorous species and helping to maintain species-rich fen vegetation and a diverse sward structure. In the absence of grazing, cutting and removal of the vegetation to create open areas and reduce the dominance of coarse grasses is desirable.

Specific objectives include:

Where appropriate, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the blocking of drains to prevent the vegetation from drying out.

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the maintenance of good water quality through the control of pollution and artificial enrichment.

Where feasible, Environment and Heritage Service would encourage the grazing of fen and swamp although overgrazing should be avoided as the wet soils are particularly susceptible to poaching. Where grazing is not possible, other management practices, such as cutting, may be used.

In general, the control of scrub within fen and swamp communities can be achieved through the appropriate grazing regime. In some cases additional scrub control may be required.

Wintering Waterbirds

Upper Lough Erne - Galloon ASSI is a wintering site for large numbers of migratory waterbirds. As part of the Upper Lough Erne system it supports an internationally important population of Whooper Swan and numbers of Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Mute Swan, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye and Coot that are significant in an all-Ireland context.

Swans, geese and ducks are attracted by a rich food supply and secure roost sites. Wildfowl make use of both open water and surrounding open habitats, particularly wet grassland, for feeding. Aquatic vegetation and invertebrates are important food sources for many ducks while swans, geese and some ducks obtain a proportion of their food on land. The quality of feeding areas is, however, susceptible to the influence of operations undertaken both within and outside the ASSI that may result in pollution or changes in water quality or unacceptable levels of disturbance to feeding birds. It is therefore important that damaging practices are minimised around the ASSI.

Secure roost sites, free from disturbance, are essential to allow the birds to conserve energy when not feeding. Some of these roosts may lie outside the ASSI. Undisturbed roosts are particularly important during severe winter weather. Wildfowl usually roost on open water. The variety of habitats present within the ASSI should be managed in order to safeguard the wintering waterbird population.

Specific objectives include:

Feeding habitats – it is important to maintain the quality and extent of habitat used for feeding by the birds, in particular the open water and surrounding reedbeds, fen and grassland, where present.

Disturbance around known roost sites and frequently used feeding areas should be minimised.

Management principles applicable to all habitats throughout the site

Environment and Heritage Service would encourage all activities associated with site maintenance, management, access and recreation to be undertaken in a sensitive manner that ensures disturbance to the site and its wildlife is minimised.

Discourage non-native species, especially those that tend to spread at the expense of native wildlife.

Maintain the diversity and quality of habitats associated with the main habitats such as hedges, scrub and woodland, through sensitive management. These

adjoining habitats can often be very important for wildlife, especially invertebrates.

E Diane Stevenson

E Diane Stevenson
Authorised Officer

Dated the 23RD of JANUARY 2008