Site Name: Ballyallia Lake SAC

Site Code: 000014

Ballyallia Lake is a relatively small, shallow lake situated on the River Fergus approximately 4 km north of Ennis, Co. Clare. It is a naturally eutrophic lake, a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The lake, which is base-rich with relatively clear water, is set amongst heavily farmed land to the north and south, with a low-lying floodplain of wet grassland and rough grazing to the west.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[3150] Natural Eutrophic Lakes

Habitat and species diversity around the lake is low and only a few emergent plants are found, e.g. Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*) and Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*). Lough Girroga, about 1 km to the south of Ballyallia, is included in the site. It is a small lake with a high diversity of vegetation communities and plant species. Here there is a well-developed reed fringe with a fen-like community of Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*), Common Club-rush, Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and the less common Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*). A well-established Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) woodland slopes down to the northern lakeshore.

Ballyallia Lake is also a Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds and a Wildfowl Sanctuary. The lake and the floodplain to the west hold nationally important numbers of Shoveler (120), Wigeon (1,200), Coot (300), Mallard (600) and Gadwall (76). Significant numbers of Whooper Swan (80), an Annex I species under the Birds Directive, also use the site. Other regular wintering species include Teal (170), Lapwing (1100), Tufted Duck (188), Pintail (35) and Little Grebe (38) (all counts are maxima from 1994/95 - 1995/96).

Agricultural improvement to the lands surrounding the lakes poses a significant threat to the water quality of the system.