



An Agency within the Department of the

Environment

www.doeni.gov.uk



EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds: Citation for Special Protection Area (SPA)

Name: Antrim Hills Special Protection Area

Unitary Authority/County: Moyle District Council, Ballymoney, Ballymena and Larne Borough Councils.
County Antrim

Consultation proposal: Sections of the Antrim Hills have been selected for classification as a two-sector Special Protection Area because of their important breeding populations of Hen Harrier and Merlin.

Site description: The Antrim Hills site comprises two land units. The northern, larger, section extends between Carnanmore and Soarne's Hill, including Ballypatrick Forest, Slieveanorra Forest/Breen Wood and Glenariff/Cleggan Forest, mainly including land above the 220m contour. The southern section comprises the area bounded by Capanagh, Ballyboley and Douglas Top. Both sections are delimited principally by physical boundaries closest to merged radii extending 2.5km from nest sites used by Hen Harriers between 1997 and 2004. The site encompasses all lands within these boundaries, excluding wholly-improved pasture, arable land, buildings and associated lands. It includes coniferous plantations, blanket bog, wet and dry heath, grass moor, scrub, inland cliff and limited semi-improved agricultural grassland. The principal interests are the breeding populations of Hen Harrier and Merlin.

Size of SPA: The SPA covers an area of 27,093.12 ha.

Qualifying species:

The site qualifies under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting nationally important populations of the following species:

Annex 1 species	Count and Season	Period	% Irish population
Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i>	25 pairs – breeding	Census – 2004 ¹	13.7 %
	17 pairs – breeding	Census - 1998 ²	12.1%
Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>	8 pairs - breeding	Various years 2000 - 2005 ³	7.3%
	6 -7 pairs	Atlas – 1988-1991 ⁴	5.5% - 6.4%

¹RSPB UK Hen Harrier census 2004

² Sim, I.M.W., Gibbons, D.W., Bainbridge, I.P. & Mattingley, W.A. 2001. Status of the Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* in the UK and Isle of Man in 1998. *Bird Study* **48**: 341-353.

³Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group

⁴New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland, 1988-1991

Status of SPA

Antrim Hills Special Protection Area was classified as a Special Protection Area on date (Day, Month, Year).