

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT MILL LOUGH,
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 "Mill Lough area of special scientific interest".

The lough is of special scientific interest because of its wetland flora and fauna. Mill Lough, a satellite water body of Upper Lough Erne, is a large inter-drumlin lake with a species-rich assemblage of aquatic plants. It displays a well-developed transition from open water, through emergent swamp and fen, to carr woodland or fen meadow. The lake is of particular importance for its aquatic vegetation, as it is one of only three water bodies in Northern Ireland with eight species of Pondweed (Potamogeton spp.). In addition, significant numbers of waterfowl use the lough in winter.

The aquatic vegetation is dominated by extensive submerged beds of Pondweeds, consisting of Long-stalked Pondweed Potamogeton praelongus and Shining Pondweed P. lucens and more notably, occasional Bright-leaved Pondweed P. x nitens and Slender-leaved Pondweed P. filiformis. Yellow Water-lily Nuphar lutea and Canadian Waterweed Elodea canadensis are also common in the open waters.

The marginal vegetation of the lough consists of extensive stands of swamp, dominated by Common Club-rush Schoenoplectus lacustris and Bottle Sedge Carex rostrata, with Water Horsetail Equisetum fluviatile, Branched Bur-reed Sparganium erectum and Ivy-leaved Duckweed Lemna trisulca. The swamp grades into a tall fen, in which Common Reed Phragmites australis, Yellow Iris Iris pseudacorus, Marsh Marigold Caltha palustris, Marsh Bedstraw Galium palustre, Water-plantain Alisma plantago-aquatica, Water Mint Mentha aquatica, Purple-loosestrife Lythrum salicaria, Wild Angelica Angelica sylvestris and Bogbean Menyanthes trifoliata form the bulk of the vegetation. This merges into a narrow fringe of flooded Alder Alnus glutinosa and Grey Willow Salix cinerea carr.

Where the shoreline is grazed, there is often a transition to wet mesotrophic grassland, which may be very variable in species content. Rushes and sedges are predominant here, especially Sharp-flowered Rush Juncus acutiflorus, Soft-rush J. effusus and Hard Rush J. inflexus, with Carnation Sedge Carex panicea and Common Sedge C. nigra. The main grasses are Creeping Bent Agrostis stolonifera, Yorkshire Fog Holcus lanatus and Red Fescue Festuca rubra, while the associated herbs consist of Cuckooflower Cardamine pratensis, Creeping Buttercup Ranunculus repens, Lesser Spearwort R. flammula and Marsh Ragwort Senecio aquaticus. The brown mosses, Calliergon cuspidatum and Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus, are abundant and form a low carpet.

In addition to some of the species listed above, the lough contains a number of locally distributed plants, including Cowbane Cicuta virosa, Rough Horsetail Equisetum hyemale and Lesser Tussock-sedge Carex diandra.

Mill Lough is important for waterfowl overwintering in the Upper Lough Erne basin, notably Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis (with 48% of the last five year average maximum count for Upper Lough Erne) and Coot Fulica atra (20%).

Mill Lough is also of invertebrate interest. The aquatic invertebrate fauna is typical of a lowland eutrophic, but comparatively unpolluted, water body. Ten species of Dragonfly (Odonata) have been recorded, making this one of the richest sites in Fermanagh. Notable species include the Hairy Dragonfly Brachytron pratense and the Ruddy Darter Sympetrum sanguineum. Several common species are abundant, particularly the Variable Damselfly Coenagrion pulchellum and the Common Emerald Damselfly Lestes sponsa.


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.
17. Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb the wildlife of the area.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
Department of the Environment for
Northern Ireland on 3 October, 1994


R W Rogers
Assistant Secretary

M. Cunningham
CIVIL SERVANT OF
CLARENCE COURT, BELFAST.

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 (Northern Ireland) 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.