

TULLYRATTY

A SPECIAL PLACE...



Tullyratty

Tullyratty has been declared as an ASSI because of its species-rich dry grassland. Species-rich grassland tends to occur only where traditional farming practices have been maintained. Such species-rich grassland is now a rare habitat in Northern Ireland.

Tullyratty is located within a landscape of rolling drumlin hills to the west of Strangford. It is situated in a lowland setting, composed of 12 adjoining fields. Variations in topography and related soil hydrology, and the effects of past and present management have resulted in the presence of a wide range of plant species in a relatively small area. Traditional management practices have produced grassland that is very species-rich.

The vegetation at Tullyratty is grass-dominated with a wide range of associated herbs and sedges. Typical grasses include Red Fescue, Crested Dog's-tail, Common Bent and Sweet Vernal-grass.

There are a variety of herb species present that are typical of traditionally managed grasslands. These include Common Knapweed, Eyebright and Common Spotted-orchid.



Common Knapweed

Other herbs such as Yellow-rattle and Wild Carrot have a more localised distribution in the sward.

In addition to the species mentioned above, Burnet-saxifrage is locally frequent on the site. This species is frequent in south-east Down and the basalt hills around Belfast, but is rare and localised elsewhere.



Eyebright

SITES OF BIOLOGICAL AND EARTH SCIENCE IMPORTANCE HAVE BEEN SURVEYED BY NORTHERN IRELAND ENVIRONMENT AGENCY TO ASSESS THEIR SCIENTIFIC INTEREST. THE BEST SITES ARE NOW BEING DECLARED AS AREAS OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (ASSIs). IN DOING SO WE AIM TO SAFEGUARD THESE IMPORTANT SITES FOR THE BENEFIT OF PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.



Burnet-saxifrage

Many of these plants are only found in grasslands where traditional forms of land management are used. The use of artificial fertilisers, herbicides or the application of manure or slurry would cause a reduction in plant numbers on the site. When soils become more fertile, grasses tend to thrive, growing faster and taller. Smaller plants such as orchids are not able to compete with the tougher grasses and as a result are lost.

Correct management is essential for special places like Tullyratty. If, for example, grazing was to cease, the field parcels would quickly become rank and scrub would invade. This would cause a reduction in the numbers of grasses and wildflowers found here. Traditional agricultural practices will ensure the survival of the rich range of plants at Tullyratty. Northern Ireland Environment Agency is keen to work closely with landowners to maintain and enhance Tullyratty ASSI.