

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT UPPER LOUGH ERNE - CROM,
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 - Crom 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. It is especially well characterised by its extensive woodlands. 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, a number of Pondweeds, such as Perfoliate Pondweed Potamogeton perfoliatus, Broad-leaved Pondweed P. natans, and, more notably, occasional Frogbit Hydrocharis morsus-ranae.

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. Exposed shores 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 Carnation Sedge Carex flacca and Glaucous Sedge C. panicea may be found.

Woodland is a particularly important habitat and the site represents one of the largest areas of semi-natural woodland remaining in Northern Ireland. 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.

Drier soils support a mature woodland, which is particularly well developed within the Crom Estate. It consists of a canopy dominated by Oak Quercus petraea, with Ash Fraxinus excelsior, and Birch Betula pubescens. Hazel Corylus avellana and Holly Ilex aquifolium often form a distinct shrub layer below. The ground flora is very variable consisting of a wide variety of species including Bluebell Hyacinthoides non-scripta, Sanicle Sanicula europaea, Goldilocks Buttercup Ranunculus auricomus, Great Wood-rush Luzula sylvatica and an abundance of the scarce Thin-spiked Wood-sedge Carex strigosa.

Parkland within the Estate is notable for the age of its trees and the communities of woodland lichens that are associated with them. These depend on the unpolluted air and the continuity of woodland management on the site. Species recorded include a number of rare lichens, whose distributions are confined to ancient woodlands.

The area contains many vascular plants with a restricted distribution in the British Isles. In addition to some of those listed above, rare species include Common Meadow-rue Thalictrum flavum, Marsh Pea Lathyrus palustris, Blue-eyed-grass Sisyrinchium bermudianum, Bird's-nest Orchid Neottia nidus-avis, Elongated Sedge Carex elongata and Marsh Fern Thelypteris palustris.

The area is also notable for its mammals, particularly bats, which include important colonies of Daubenton's Myotis daubentoni, Leisler's Nyctalus leisleri and Brown Long-eared Bat Plecotus auritus, Red Squirrel Sciurus vulgaris, Pine Marten Martes martes and Otter Lutra lutra.

A wide range of bird species occurs, reflecting the range of habitats present. Areas of wet grassland support breeding waders, including Snipe Gallinago gallinago. In the woodland areas, the population of Garden Warblers Sylvia borin is particularly notable, as this is generally a scarce species in Ireland. The colony of breeding Herons Ardea cinerea on Inishfendra is one of the largest in Ireland.

The area is also of considerable importance for its invertebrate fauna, which reflects the range of habitats present and the continuity of management. The woodland insect fauna is of particular importance and the area is known to support many rare Irish species. The butterfly fauna includes the Purple Hairstreak Quercusia quercus, which is widespread in the Oak woodlands but is known from only one other locality in Northern Ireland. Other notable Lepidoptera include the Lunar Hornet Moth Sesia bembeciformis, Scarce Prominent Odontesia carmelita and Lunar Marbled Brown Drymonia ruficornis. Two rare hoverflies, Xylota abiens, a species of old woodlands, and Xanthandrus comtus, associated with Buckthorn in wet woodlands, have also been recorded.

The wetland invertebrates are also notable. Twelve species of Dragonfly have been recorded and the population of the local Hairy Dragonfly Brachytron pratense is high. The small lakes and marshes are the habitat of several uncommon aquatic insects including the Water-beetles Dytiscus circumcinctus, Gyrinus natator and Gyrinus aqratus.

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 (4) or (5).
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 (3).
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. Alterations 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 7 July, 1994


Assistant Secretary

FOOTNOTES

- M. G. Cunningham
CIVIL SERVANT OF
CLARENCE COURT BELFAST
- (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.