

71E029

Rostellan Lough, Aghada Shore and Poul nabibe Inlet

This site occupies the north-east corner of Cork Harbour, west of Saleen and Rostellan. Geologically, Cork Harbour consists of several limestone basins reported from the sea and from each other by ridges of Old Red Sandstone.

According to a description provided for this site in the 1986 County Report, Rostellan Lough differs from the rest of Cork Harbour in that it is impounded and so is no longer tidal. As a result its bird community is distinct, with diving ducks and grebes most noticeable, little grebe (50), pochard (100), and tufted duck (60) are frequent species, some of which breed here along with mallard. Snipe are the most obvious waders present.

Vegetation on the lake margins is mostly club-rushes (*Scirpus lacustris* and *S. maritimus* especially), with a little bulrush (*Typha latifolia*). A little wet woodland of alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) occurs on some of the shore and wet grassland is frequent, with plants such as bearded couch (*Elymus caninus*), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and water mint (*Mentha aquatica*). Algae are very common in the lough itself, but the brackish nature of the water apparently inhibits the growth of many higher plants.

Mudflats occur westwards to Aghada and these were utilised by many feeding waders, while the sea offshore is used by species such as scamp, goldeneye and great crested grebe.

Although the site itself is seen to support only moderate numbers of waterfowl, the area forms an integral part of Cork Harbour, which is a wetland of international importance for its wintering populations of black-tailed godwit, curlew and redshank and its spring migration numbers of whimbrel. Twelve species occur at nationally important levels and Cork Harbour is one of only a few Irish wetlands to regularly hold over 20,000 waterfowl. The birdlife in this part of the Harbour offers an interacting contrast with the rest of the area and this feature could be used for educational purposes.

The whole Cork Harbour area is under pressure from industrial and urban development, pollution and from recreational usage. Drainage or reclamation would be particular threats to this sector of the Harbour and the level of shooting could usefully be controlled to protect bird populations. Cord-grass (*Spartina* sp.) occurs at Poul nabibe, possibly posing a threat to the quality of the mudflats there for feeding birds.

The Rostellan Lough, Aghada Shore and Poul nabibe Inlet NHA is of local significance for its waterfowl. This status is enhanced, though, as the whole of Cork Harbour is of international importance and as such is a proposed Special Protection Area. Sections such as this NHA should not be considered in isolation as the bird populations are very mobile throughout the area.