

NATURAL CLIMATE BUFFER



Ireland



Legal Status

Part of Natura 2000 Special Area of Conservation - Lower River Suir SAC (Site Code: 002137)

Part of proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) (Site Code: 1934) - a non-statutory site of national importance

Habitats and Protected Species

A mosaic of habitats including extensive reedbed, tall herb swamp, wet grassland, calcareous fen, transition mire, alluvial woodland, watercourse, lake, ponds and springs.

The wintering waterbird assemblage regularly exceeds 1000 birds and is regionally important. Wintering species include Wigeon, Mallard and Teal and red listed species Pintail, Shoveler, Wigeon, Lapwing, Golden Plover, Curlew. Breeding birds include Barn Owl, Meadow Pipit, Yellowhammer and declining numbers of Sedge Warbler

Other important animal populations include: White-clawed crayfish, Otter, Pine Marten, Salmon. Also nationally rare and scarce invertebrates, such as caddis flies *Limnephilus pati* and *L. tauricus*.

Notable plants include regionally rare species: Brookweed / Grass-of-Parnassus / Blunt-flowered rush / Summer Snowflake / Buckthorn

Management

Cabragh Wetlands Trust in collaboration with the National Parks and Wildlife Service

Adjacent wetlands are in the private ownership of neighbouring farmers

Information and Videos

<http://www.cabraghwetlands.ie/blog/>

<https://youtu.be/5QhAObXt5OI>

<https://birdwatchireland.ie/app/uploads/2019/03/Site-Guide-Cabragh-Wetlands.pdf>

Cabragh Wetlands

Introduction

Cabragh wetlands form part of the active floodplain of the upper River Suir, are the biggest single area of freshwater semi-natural floodplain habitats on the River Suir, and are important for wintering and breeding birds. Current habitats are developed on cutover fen peat and alluvial soils, influenced by grazing, mowing, flooding and the discharge of calcareous groundwater/springs on the wetland margins. The remaining wetlands were part of a larger area of wetlands, some of which were used as settlement ponds by the Thurles Sugar Factory. When the factory closed in 1989, and the ornithologically important settlement ponds were infilled, local people established the Cabragh Wetlands Trust and purchased some of the remaining wetland for wildlife protection. Since then Trust volunteers have developed conservation, recreation and education activities at the site and built a multi-purpose centre for the local community.

Issues & key challenges

Sustaining community engagement and developing the site as the Tipperary Centre for Environmental Learning.

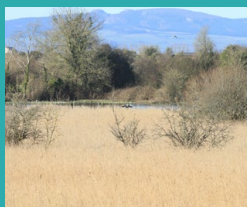
Balancing and sustaining conservation goals, visitor access and business needs, particularly in view of total reliance on volunteer resources for operational costs.

Risks and challenges of managing habitats via informal grazing arrangements and undertaking small-scale management works such as mowing, clearance of ponds, cutting of vegetation, etc., in the absence of a long term management plan and the resources to implement it.

Reducing quality of habitat for breeding waders possibly due to factors such as changes in water levels and land use (grazing, scrub encroachment and intensification in surrounding areas), predation and human disturbance.

Lack of baseline and monitoring data on hydrology, quantification of the ecosystem services provided and of survey data on faunal populations.

Vulnerability of wetland habitats to wider intensification of land use pressures in the catchment.



Outcomes & benefits

- Reduction in water/flood damage risk in downstream areas
- Water retention; fewer problems from drought (nature and agriculture)
- Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- Improvement of fresh water quality
- Habitat for plants and animals, especially wintering waterbirds; retaining and restoring biodiversity
- Adaptive habitat management agreements (horse grazing) with neighbouring members of the travelling community
- Improving the quality of the landscape
- The Wetland Centre serves as focal point for community groups, academia, businesses and public bodies to hold meetings, training and events
- Bolstering tourism and environmental values, expanding recreational opportunities

Lessons learnt & future

Significant role of local community in protecting, restoring and appreciating wetlands and engaging them in the long term protection and wise use of local natural resources

Opportunities for enhancing environmental awareness and knowledge through citizen science projects and educational programmes, including lifelong learning

Use of technical advisory group to progress projects and lead sub-committees on Habitat Management, Education and Training, Social Media and Events, informed by management recommendations in the independent report *Cabragh Wetlands Habitat Study (2020)*



CARBON SINK



NATURAL SPONGE



BLUE-GREEN SPACE

More info



An Roinn Tithíochta, Rialtais Aitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage



An tSeirbhís Páircenna Náisiúnta agus Fíadhúlra
National Parks and Wildlife Service



Eurosite Factsheet

Wetlands and Climate Change

www.eurosite.org | info@eurosite.org