

Lough Derg (on the Shannon) is the third largest lake in Ireland and the largest lake in the River Shannon system. It is a stunningly beautiful and largely undiscovered natural amenity in the heart of Ireland. Whether you are a nature lover, someone who enjoys the great outdoors, or you would like to learn a bit more about the wilder side of Lough Derg, there is something here for you! Go explore!



# LOUGH DERG ON THE SHANNON NATURE TRAIL

## Other publications in the series



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An Chomhairle Oldhreachta  
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LAKELANDS &  
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## INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to the Lough Derg (on the Shannon) Nature Trail! Lough Derg is a stunningly beautiful and largely undiscovered natural amenity in the heart of Ireland, and a haven for wildlife. This brochure describes the Nature Trail, which circles the lake, and the rich natural heritage that visitors may encounter on their travels in and around Lough Derg.



Whether you are a nature lover, someone who enjoys the great outdoors, or you would like to learn a bit more about the wilder side of Lough Derg, there is something here for you. This brochure describes a variety of sites along the Nature Trail including walking routes, lakeshore access, birdwatching locations, woodland parks for adventuring, and quiet spots to enjoy the beautiful vistas of the lake. It captures many of the natural highlights in the Lough Derg area but there are many more to discover. You can travel the whole trail (which might take some time as it's approximately 130km in length and would take about 4 hours to drive in one go!) or you can join the trail at any of the stops.

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A hugely important access route to the midlands in prehistoric times, Lough Derg has a long and colourful history of habitation. The rich built and cultural heritage of the Lough Derg area is detailed in 'The Lough Derg (on the Shannon) Heritage Trail' phone app (see Further Information section below for how to obtain).

Lough Derg is the third largest lake in Ireland and the largest lake in the River Shannon system. The lake is Ireland's premier inland navigation and water sports destination, and is a paradise for anglers. Lough Derg is fully navigable and has many beautiful harbours and piers for mooring.



*Boating on Lough Derg (Photo: Velma Mercer)*

Lough Derg lies within a limestone basin. The surrounding uplands, the Slieve Aughties, the Arra Mountains and Slieve Bearnagh, are composed of much harder rock, mainly sandstones. The diversity of landscapes that you will encounter when you visit the Lough Derg lakelands is a result of the variation in geology (i.e. limestone in the lowlands and sandstones in the uplands), topography, climate and land-use history in and around the lake. The outstanding natural heritage of Lough Derg enhances the visitor experience by providing a range of vistas, sights, sounds and places to explore and opportunities to experience and learn about nature and wildlife.



View of Lough Derg from Rosmore Pier (Photo: Allan Mee)

### Protecting Nature

Lough Derg, and several areas in the surrounding landscape (see map on inside cover), are designated for nature conservation both as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and a Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which reflects the huge significance of the natural heritage in this area. SACs and SPAs are part of the Natura 2000 network of sites across Europe, which are considered to be the most important sites for nature conservation across the European Union. SACs are designated on the basis of containing species and habitats of nature conservation importance because they are rare internationally, declining or under threat e.g. Otters and bogs. SPAs are designated because they contain birds of conservation concern and their habitats e.g. waterbirds such as Tufted Duck and Goldeneye, and birds of prey such as Merlin and the Hen Harrier.



Landscape view of Church Bay, Lough Derg (Photo: Allan Mee)

The variety of habitats and abundance of species of conservation importance makes Lough Derg a jewel in the crown Ireland's biodiversity resource. Whether you travel Lough Derg by boat or explore the many bays, woods, wetlands and uplands along the shoreline on foot, you are in the midst of a vibrant ecosystem that is teeming with life all year round. Lough Derg is a wonderful place to enjoy and experience nature, and is also an excellent destination for the specialist interested in seeing some of the rare and interesting species that can be found. Go explore!



Evening time on Lough Derg (Photo: Eamon Brennan)

## HOW THIS GUIDE WORKS

The Lough Derg (on the Shannon) Nature Trail is essentially a driving route with many stops on the way (see map on the inside cover). This beautiful area can also be explored on foot along the walking routes that run on either side of the lake, the East Clare Way and the Lough Derg Way, or by bicycle along the Lough Derg Cycle Route<sup>1</sup>.

The Lough Derg (on the Shannon) Nature Trail is described from Portumna in County Galway down the western shore of the lake, to Killaloe in County Clare, and back up on the eastern side to Terryglass in County Tipperary but it can be travelled in any direction. You can visit one or all of the sites listed. The stops along the route include places with lake access (piers, harbours etc.), viewing points and walking routes. Features of interest are noted for each stop.

When you are out exploring Lough Derg and environs please follow the **Leave No Trace** principles:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Be Considerate of Others
- Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife
- Travel and Camp on Durable Ground
- Leave What You Find
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Minimise the Effects of Fire

Be conscious at all times that you may be on or close to active farmland. Keep dogs on a leash at all times in or near farms and farm animals. Be courteous and sensitive to local people. But above all enjoy yourself and the many delights that Lough Derg, the islands and its shoreline has to offer!

<sup>1</sup><http://www.everytrail.com/guide/lough-derg-cycleway>,  
<http://www.everytrail.com/guide/lough-derg-way>;  
<http://www.everytrail.com/guide/east-clare-way>



Birdwatching in Mountshannon (Photo: Allan Mee)



## LOUGH DERG WILDLIFE HABITATS

There is a huge diversity of habitats in and around Lough Derg including the lake itself, rivers, wetlands, woodlands, farmland, raised bogs, upland blanket bog, heathland and conifer plantation. These habitats provide food, shelter and cover for a myriad of wildlife. The wealth of nature in and around the lake greatly enhances the scenic quality of the area, producing an every changing palette of colours, texture, sights and sounds as you travel around the lake.

### The lake

Lough Derg is 40km long and is less than 5km wide for most of its length. The widest point is from Scariff Bay to Youghal Bay (13km). The lake is relatively shallow at the northern end (mostly around 6m in depth) but it descends to over 25m as you travel south along the lake. The deepest point is 34m off Parker's Point. Water in the lake is relatively hard as you might expect as it lies within a limestone basin. The lake has many small islands, especially on its western and northern sides, ranging from the tiny Goat Island north of Killaloe to the largest island, Illaunmore (95ha).



Mute Swan (Photo: Eamon Brennan)



Sailing on Lough Derg (Photo: Velma Mercer)

Lough Derg is characterised by broad bays, a highly indented shoreline and many islands. Much of the lake is fringed with reed beds, wetlands, fens, wet woods and native woodland, all of which help protect the water quality of the lake. The lake is flanked by the Slieve Aughty and Slieve Bearnagh Mountains to the west, and the Arra Mountains to the east. These uplands provide wonderful viewing points for the lake and greatly enhance the scenic quality of the area.



*Fishing on Lough Derg (Photo: John Leech)*

Lough Derg is famed for its Brown Trout fishing, particularly during the Mayfly season which tends to peak in mid-May. Trout feed voraciously on the Mayfly before heading up river to spawn. The lake is also teeming with coarse fish including Pike Perch, Roach and Bream. There used to be a commercial Eel fishery on Lough Derg but Eels are now protected due to the drastic decline in their numbers within the European Union.

Pollan, a rare type of fish, is also present in the lake although numbers are much reduced. Pollan is only found in five Irish lakes (its nearest relatives are in the

arctic). The lake contains a landlocked population of Sea Lamprey, River Lamprey and probably some Brook Lamprey. Lamprey are a primitive and peculiar group of fishes that look like eels. Some attach themselves to other fish during their lifecycle.

There are many rivers and streams that flow into and out of Lough Derg, the most notable of which is of course the mighty Shannon. Important tributaries to the lake include the Nenagh, Ballyfinboy, Woodford, Crow and Scariff Rivers. These have an additional flora and fauna associated with them that add to the diversity of Lough Derg. Several of the tributaries that





Angler with Brown Trout (Photo: John Leech)



White-tailed Sea Eagle (Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan)



White-tailed Sea Eagle (Photo: Allan Mee)

Lough Derg is a great place for birdwatching as it supports important populations of both breeding and overwintering birds. The large numbers of resident birds are joined by summer visitors and others that arrive in winter. There are numerous piers and quays where you can observe waterbirds at close quarters and lovely walking routes around the lake where wetland, farmland and woodland birds can be seen.

White-tailed Sea Eagles are the most prominent members of Lough Derg's rich bird fauna and a regular sight in summer. They nest on islands on the lake much to the delight of visitors and local residents. The lake provides them with the fish diet they require and the security of safe nesting sites on the islands. These truly spectacular birds of prey were reintroduced to Ireland from Norwegian populations by the Golden Eagle Trust and have bred successfully in recent years. White-tailed Sea Eagles have been seen in a number of locations around the lake but they are most easily seen in Mountshannon in the summer.

Waterbirds of nature conservation interest on Lough Derg include the Tufted Duck, Cormorant, Common Tern, and Goldeneye. The lake is designated for nature conservation as a Special Protection Area (SPA) because it supports important populations of these species. SPAs are designed to protect birds of conservation importance and their habitats.



*Tufted Duck (Photo: Eamon Brennan)*

There is a resident population of Tufted Duck in Ireland but numbers swell when visiting birds arrive in winter. Tufted Duck is a diving duck that feeds on mussels and insect larvae. They nest in waterside vegetation. Cormorants are also resident all year round in Ireland but some arrive to spend the winter here. These distinctive birds feed on fish and can regularly be seen roosting on piers and rocks. These nest in trees in colonies around the lake. Common Terns are a summer visitor that arrives to breed on the lake. They can be seen flying gracefully over the water and diving for fish. Goldeneye are winter visitors that arrive that travel down from Scandinavia to overwinter in Ireland.

Greenland White-fronted Geese are also winter visitors to Ireland. They used to arrive in large numbers to sites around Lough Derg and feed on bogs and agricultural grasslands. They still use sites around the lake but not in such big numbers.

Other waterbirds to keep an eye out for include the Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Whooper Swan, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Pochard, Coot, Black-tailed Godwit and the familiar Mute Swan. Red-breasted

Mergansers now breed on the lake and several Gulls can regularly be spotted- Common Gull, Mediterranean Gull and the Lesser Black-based Gull.

Boat users have a responsibility to ensure their activities do not disturb water-birds, particularly breeding birds. When travelling close to shore, speed should be kept low to avoid creating waves or a wash that might disturb or displace breeding birds and/or young birds.



*Cormorant (Photo: Eamon Brennan)*



Common Tern (Photo: Dan Breen)



Wigeon (Photo: Dan Breen)



Black-headed Gull (Photo: Dan Breen)

A remarkable natural spectacle that can be seen in late autumn and winter evenings on Lough Derg are the flight displays of Starling murmurations. A murmuration is a gathering of Starlings. In late autumn and winter, many thousands of Starlings gather and put on amazing aerial flight displays before roosting communally for the night. Numbers of Starlings are boosted by visitors arriving from Europe in winter. Just before dusk is the best time to see Starlings perform their mesmerising aerial dance, which is something akin to a continuous Mexican wave. The reasons for these spectacular flight displays are not fully understood but the large gatherings probably offer safety in numbers. Predators such as Peregrine Falcons might find it hard to target one bird amidst a hypnotising flock of thousands. Starlings possibly gather to fine tune their flying skills and perhaps to keep warm at night. Starling murmurations can be seen over Lough Derg in from the lake or along the shore.



Starling murmuration at northern end of Lough Derg seen from the water (Photo: Edmund Burke)



Otters live in and around Lough Derg, also benefiting from the ample supply of fish. These secretive mammals are widespread in Ireland but very difficult to spot. In fact, Ireland is considered to be the European stronghold for Otters. The most common way of detecting the presence of Otters in an area is to look for their droppings known as spraints. Otters are highly territorial and they mark their territories by leaving spraints in prominent locations such as grass tussocks and boulders. Keep an eye out for Otters or signs of Otters when walking close to the shore of the lake.



Otter (Photo: Eamon Brennan)

## Wetlands

Much of the shoreline of Lough Derg is fringed by a variety of wetlands including reed swamps, fens and callows. Wetlands are hugely important for maintaining the water quality of the lake as they act like filters intercepting nutrients and sediments in run-off from the surrounding landscapes, and releasing water slowly. These watery habitats are very beautiful with their rich variety of colour, texture and movement. You can listen to the soundscape of the wetlands with the gentle rattle of the reeds, hum of insects and constant birdsong. Wetlands provide great cover for waterbirds and spawning grounds for fish.

Reed swamp fringes much of the lake shore dominated by Common Reed or Common Club rush. Fens are a type of peatland often found near lake edges and there are some extensive areas of fen along the Lough Derg shore. These fens are dominated by a variety of sedges, rushes and grasses (e.g. Great Fen Sedge, Bottle Sedge, Black Bog Rush and Purple Moor Grass) and flowers (Meadow Sweet, Purple Loosestrife and Wild Angelica). Callows are another type of wetland found in Lough Derg, mainly along the River Shannon as it enters the lake in Portumna. Callows are a special type of grassland that occurs along the floodplains of rivers. They tend to be managed as meadows and can be particularly species-rich with a variety of flowers include Yellow Loosestrife, Sneezewort, Ragged Robin and sometimes the rare Marsh Pea.



Reed swamp dominated by Common Reed (Photo: Velma Mercer)



Reed swamp dominated by Common Club Rush in the foreground



*Meadowsweet*



*Purple Loosestrife*



*Angelica*



*Banded Demoiselle*  
(Photo: Tom Cuffe)



*Black-tailed Skimmer*  
(Photo: Tom Cuffe)



*Azure Blue Damselfly*  
(Photo: Tom Cuffe)

Wetlands are teeming with insect life, particularly in spring and summer. Butterflies, Damselflies and Dragonflies are usually the easiest to spot as they dash about with great urgency looking for food and a mate. The abundant and varied wetlands around Lough Derg provide food and cover for a great variety of these beautiful insects. Important butterfly populations found at sites around Lough Derg include threatened species such as Wall, Dark Green and Marsh Fritillaries, Large and Small Heath. In late summer the many marshy ponds and bogs are home to dragonflies and damselflies including the rare Turlough Spreadwing and spectacular species such as Banded Demoiselle, Azure Bluet, Blue Emperor and Black-tailed Skimmer.

The abundant insect-life in wetlands provides a rich food source for the many birds that use wetlands for nesting and/or foraging. Curlew, Snipe, Redshank and Lapwing are familiar waders that can be seen at different times of the year. Curlews are beautiful birds often seen in and around wetlands. Their eerie call one of the most evocative sounds of the wetlands. Curlews, along with other breeding waders, are of high conservation concern because their numbers have declined in Ireland and the rest of Europe largely due to the loss of wetland habitats. Snipe nest on the ground in bogs and wetlands on grassy tussocks. Lapwing arrive in large numbers in winter but we also have a resident population in Ireland. They can be easily recognised with their distinctive black and white colouring, and wispy crest on their heads.



*Small heath* (Photo: Tom Cuffe)



*Snipe* (Photo: Dan Breen)





Lapwing (Photo: Dan Breen)

The abundance of insects in and around Lough Derg also provides a rich source of food for Bats. Common and Soprano Pipistrelle species are common around the lake, along with the Brown Long-Eared Bat, Daubenton's Bat and Leisler's Bat (which is rare in Britain and the rest of Europe but relatively common in Ireland). Daubenton's Bat is often called the 'water bat' because it skims like a hovercraft low to the water in search of insects. Natterer's has also been recorded foraging along woodland tracks or near water.

## Woodlands

A notable feature of Lough Derg is the considerable extent and variety of woodland around its shores. Native Oak woods occur in the Slieve Aughty mountains near Woodford and in Portumna Forest Park. Oak with an understorey of Holly occurs in the ancient oakwoods in Derrycrag, Woodford and other sites nearby. Stands of native woodland with Oak, Birch and Ash can be seen in Portumna Forest Park. Wet woodland with Willow and Alder fringes much of the lakeshore in a mosaic with other wetlands such as reed swamp and fens. There are extensive areas of conifer plantation around the lake and in the uplands. Many of these plantations include a considerable amount of broadleaves such as Beech, Birch, Ash and some Oak.



Oakwoods at Derrycrag



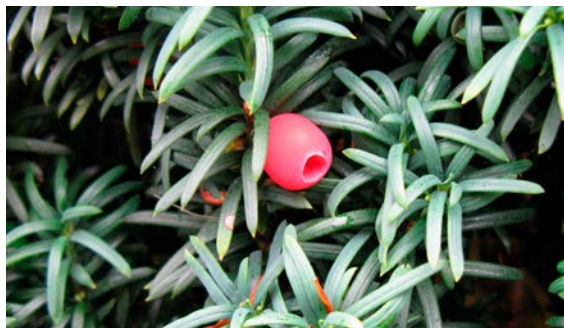
Wet woods and reed swamp

A particularly rare type of woodland, Yew woodland is found on limestone pavement (i.e. exposed limestone rock, boulders and rubble) on the north and north-eastern edge of the lake, including in Portumna Forest Park. Yew is one of our few native conifers along with Juniper and arguably Scots Pine. Unusual stands of Juniper (another native conifer) also occur on the north and eastern shore of the lake in fens and species-rich calcareous grassland. Juniper usually grows in a prostrate form close to the ground but at Portumna and the northern edge of Lough Derg stands of upright Juniper can be seen.





*Upright Juniper at Portumna Forest Park*



*Yew*

Woodlands, particularly native woods, tend to have a particularly high biodiversity because of their age and structure. Ireland was once completely covered with woodland and much of our native flora and fauna is adapted to live in and around woodlands. The woods around Lough Derg are alive with a huge variety of insects, birds and mammals. Red Squirrel numbers declined markedly in Ireland after the arrival of the non-native Grey Squirrel. The Red Squirrel population in the woods around Lough Derg is, however, in a relatively healthy state and Squirrel are often spotted

by walkers. The enigmatic Pine Marten is also present but seldom seen. Other woodland mammals present include Deer, Fox, Stoat and Badger.



*Whitegate (Photo: Allan Mee)*

The variety of woodland types around the lake (upland and lowland, dry and wet woodland) provides a range of habitats for birds. Woodland birds include Tits (Long-tailed, Coal Tit, Blue Tit and Great Tit), Jay, Crossbill, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Treecreeper, Blackcap and Sparrowhawk. Jays are commonly found in broadleaved woodlands. These striking birds are probably one of the most colourful and striking birds breeding in Ireland although not easy to see because they are shy and rarely leave woodlands. Chiffchaffs are so called because of their sing song call, "chiff chaff chiff chaff". Sparrowhawk are probably our most common bird of prey. They feed on small birds.



*Jay (Photo: Colin Stanley)*



Fox (Photo: Eamon Brennan)



Red Squirrel (Photo: Joe Kilroy)



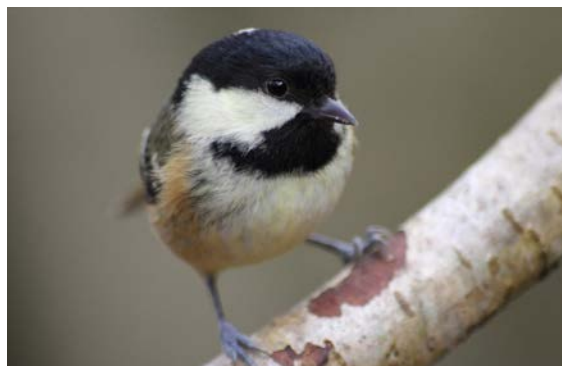
Pine Marten (Photo: Colin Smith)



Stoat (Photo: Dan Breen)



Long-tailed Tit (Photo: Colin Stanley)



Coal Tit (Photo: Colin Stanley)



Butterflies tend to be seen along woodland paths and rides in summer. Keep an eye out for Wood White, Ringlet, Speckled Wood and Silver-washed Fritillary when walking through woods or along hedgerows. The rare Purple Hairstreak has been recorded in Oak woods around Lough Derg.



*Silver-washed Fritillary (Photo: Tom Cuffe)*

### **Raised bogs**

There are several small raised bogs around Lough Derg. Raised bogs are a type of peatland that started to form at the end of the last Ice Age, over ten thousand years ago. These bogs formed in depressions and lake basins that in-filled with vegetation over time. Peat, which is made up of dead plants, starts to build up when conditions are waterlogged and plant decomposition rates are slow. The rate of peat growth increases markedly once Bog Moss arrives and acidifies the environment. Raised bogs can have depth of peat of up to 12m!



*Bog moss*



*Sundew, insect-eating plant*

Bogs have a fascinating flora because only certain plants can survive in the waterlogged, nutrient-poor and acidic conditions. Heathers, Bog Cottons, Sedges and Bog Mosses dominate the bog flora forming a rich tapestry of colour, which changes through the seasons. Some plants have adopted extreme strategies to cope with the low nutrient content of the peat by eating insects! Sundews, Butterworts and Bladderworts all supplement their diet by munching on a few insects. Bogs have been an integral part of our cultural heritage and Irish identify for generations.

### **Uplands**

Lough Derg is framed by the Slieve Aughties and Slieve Bearnagh to the west and the Arra mountains to the east. These uplands provide great vistas of the lake and contain a wealth of upland habitats including blanket bog, heath and conifer plantation. The lucky walker might catch a glimpse of a Hen Harrier in summer in the Slieve Aughties, one of our rarest birds of prey, in the heather-rich heathy hillsides. Hen Harriers also use young conifer plantations for breeding. Merlin also breed in these uplands. Meadowpipit and Skylark are frequently encountered in the uplands, on bog or heath. Skylarks are a familiar sight and sound to anyone working on the bog in summer as their birdsong, a continuous stream of warbling notes, can be heard while they hover at a considerable height overhead.





Hen Harrier (Photo: Mike Brown)



View of Arra Mountain



Heathery hillside

## Farmland

Much of the rolling landscapes of the lowlands around Lough Derg are characterised by productive farmland. This farmland is dissected by many kilometres of hedgerows. Mature trees, mainly Ash but also Oak, Sycamore and Beech, are common site in fields and hedges greatly enhancing the countryside. Hedgerows provide networks for animals to move through the landscape and are particularly important for birds and bats.



Kestrel (Photo: Tom Cuffe)

### Focus on alien invaders!

Invasive species are plants or animals that have been introduced to Ireland by people and have a negative impact on native species and habitats, and can alter how native ecosystems (such as lakes) work. Several alien invaders are causing problems in Lough Derg including the Zebra Mussel, Asian Clam and Mink. Others are present and may cause problems in the future, such as Curley Waterweed. We all have a responsibility to ensure these invaders aren't introduced to other lakes, particularly boat users and anglers. Precautions must be taken if moving your boat to another freshwater body. Never empty water from aquariums or small ponds into the lake (or any other lake) because you risk introducing invasive species.

For more information see [www.fisheriesireland.ie/Research/invasive-species.html](http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/Research/invasive-species.html)



Zebra Mussel shells (Photo: Velma Merver)

## LOUGH DERG NATURE TRAIL



Portumna, Co. Galway

Portumna is situated at the northern end of Lough Derg where the River Shannon flows into the lake. The Irish name for Portumna, Port Omna, means the 'landing place of the oak'. The town has a long and interesting history and heritage largely due to its strategic location at the meeting point of the Shannon and Lough Derg. Today Portumna is a popular centre for coarse fishing and boating on the Shannon and Lough Derg. It is an excellent place to access and enjoy the lake, and has a wonderful Forest Park that is highly popular with walkers.



## 1 Portumna Water Recreation Park, Co. Galway

SAT NAV: 53.0835, -8.2108



Known locally as 'the swimming area' the Portumna Water Recreation Park is located just south of the town. The site has a quay and designated areas for swimming and fishing. This beautiful corner of the lake is an ideal place for birdwatching, fishing, walking or just enjoying the sights and sounds of the lake.

The Water Recreation Park is a particularly good location for bird-watching. Mallard, Teal and Tufted Duck are present on the lake all year round. In winter, Wigeon, Gadwall, Shoveler, Pochard and Goldeneye can also be seen. The graceful Common Tern is a regular sight during the breeding season in summer. White-tailed Sea Eagles have often been spotted in this area. Look out for a Kingfisher flashing by on a fishing trip. The remarkable flight patterns that huge flocks of Starlings perform in winter, known as 'murmurations', can regularly be seen near Portumna. The Starlings roost at night on the extensive reed swamp.

Wetlands fringe the lake on either side of the swimming area. The Common Club-rush is the main component of much of these wet lake margins in this area but Yellow Water Lily, Water Mint and Water Plantain can also be spotted.



*Stand of Common Club Rush*



*Common Tern (Photo: Tom Cuffe)*



*Kingfisher, a riverine bird (Photo: Tom Cuffe)*



There is an extensive area of callows to the north of the Water Recreation Park with Reed Canary Grass, Meadowsweet, Ragged Robin, Angelica, sedges and rushes. The relatively rare Marsh Pea is also present. Callow grasslands extend northwards on either side of the River Shannon. Reed swamp and callows provide nesting and foraging habitats for many birds, and are often teeming with insects, especially dragonflies and damselflies, and snails.



*Marsh pea*



*Callows north of Portumna (Photo: Micheline Sheehy Skeffington)*



*View of callows looking north from the swimming area*

## 2 Portumna Forest Park, Co. Galway

SAT NAV: 53.0829, -8.2407

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*Juniper in the foreground Portumna Forest Park*

Portumna Forest Park<sup>2</sup> is located just west of Portumna Town. The Park can be accessed from the R352 or you can walk from Portumna Marina close to the centre of town (or indeed the swimming area mentioned above). Originally part of the Portumna Castle Demesne, the Park is a popular recreational amenity with kilometres of walking trails including four way-marked trails. The **White Trail** is the 'Forest Friendly' walking trail and is suitable for buggies and wheelchairs (1.4 km), the **Blue Trail** is the 'Woodland Walk' (2km), the **Green Trail** is the 'Rinmaher Walking Trail' (10km) and finally the **Red Trail**, the Bonaveen Walking Trail (10km). All trails begin at the Forest Park information centre next to the car park and are well-signposted. They are open to mountain bikers, as well as, walkers. There are picnic tables adjacent to the main carpark and the information centre.

Portumna Forest Park contains an extensive area of woodland the majority of which is a coniferous plantation with Scots Pine, Sitka and Norway Spruce.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.everytrail.com/guide/portumna-forest-park-woodland-trails>

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There are, however, some significant areas of native Oak woodland with Oak, Ash, Holly and Silver Birch, and stands of other broadleaves such as Beech and Maples. Our native conifers, Yew and Juniper can be seen along the lake shore, as well as reed swamp, marsh and wet woodland with Willow and Alder.

The Forest Park is a stronghold for Red Squirrel. There is also large herd of Fallow Deer. Pine Marten are present but they are shy animals and not easily seen. If walking off the trail, you might come across a Badger sett. Many woodland birds can be spotted or heard in the park including Tits, Crossbill, Treecreeper, Jays, Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff and Sparrowhawk. A large Cormorant colony can be seen nesting on offshore islands near Rinmaher (follow the Green Trail) and Black-headed Gulls breed on the islands. White-tailed Sea Eagles have been seen occasionally offshore and in the Bonaveen area. On a sunny day keep an eye out for butterflies along the woodland rides (including the rare Purple Hairstreak), dragonflies (with exciting names like Spring Hawk and Four-spotted Chaser), and damselflies (also with evocative names like Banded Jewelwing, Azure Bluet and Common Bluetip) nearer the shore in the wetlands.

### Crossbill

Once a rarity in Ireland, the Common Crossbill has now colonised many areas including the Slieve Aughty mountains due to the spread of forestry. Crossbills have unique sideways curved bills evolved for extracting the seeds of pine cones. Although difficult to spot in the high tree-tops, crossbills do come down to roadside puddles to drink. Look out for the stunning crimson males and greenish females and the distinctive, loud ping calls of travelling flocks!



### 3 Abbeyville Golden Mile, Abbey, Co. Galway

SAT NAV 53.1022, -8.3918



40

Abbey is a delightful small village in the foothills of the Sliabh Aughties. Parking is available in the village across the road from the Catholic Church. The Abbeyville Golden Mile walk starts a short distance away from the village centre. Just follow the sign for St. Feichín's Cemetery and Holy Well and you will come to the stone marker that indicates the beginning of the route. You can walk the mile along a quiet country road, or further if you wish. This award-winning mile is a community initiative to provide a safe and attractive walking route in the locality. Biodiversity has been enhanced on the route with bug hotels and a wildflower meadow. The road is lined with leafy hedgerows of Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Honeysuckle and Holly. Ash trees are abundant in the hedgerows locally providing a wooded feel to the area. The route eventually comes to the stone bridge over the Lacken River, a tributary of the Cappagh River, which flows on to Lough Derg. If you continue on, you will see conifer plantation on the horizon and many mature Ash trees in the fields. This

lovely walking route highlights the landscape in the hinterland of Lough Derg with good farmland, lush hedgerows, rushy fields, woodland, rivers and streams. Keep an eye out for hedgerow birds such as Thrushes, Wrens and Tits. Lough Derg can be seen in the distance as you wander along the Golden Mile.



41



#### 4 Derrycrag Wood, Co. Galway

SAT NAV 53.0441, -8.3983



42

Derrycrag Wood is a Nature Reserve just south of Woodford Town. There are two well-signposted looped trails in the woodland- the **Red Trail** (3.3 km) and the **Green Trail** (2.2 km). Much of Derrycrag Wood is under conifers but there is a substantial area of native Oak woodland, which is remnant of the mighty Oak woods that once cloaked most of the Slieve Aughty Mountains. Native woodland is a relatively rare habitat in Ireland and ancient woodland is particularly rare. There is some evidence to suggest that Derrycrag has been under woodland for centuries if not thousands of year. There are two other Nature Reserves in the Woodford area (Poulnaknockaun and Rosturra) that also contain ancient Oak woodland and are worth a visit (see [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)). Rosturra is also a People's Millennium Forest ([www.millenniumforests.com/location\\_ecorost.html](http://www.millenniumforests.com/location_ecorost.html))

Numerous magnificent Oak trees can be seen in Derrycrag. Holly is abundant in the understorey. Other trees to look out for include Scots Pine, Ash, Birch, Rowan and Beech. The woodland floor is carpeted

with Bilberry. Both Pine Martin and Badger have been recorded in these woods but both are quite elusive. Keep an eye out for Red Squirrel too. Derrycrag provides a home for most of the typical woodland birds such as Tits, Treecreeper, Jay, Sparrowhawk and Long-tailed Tit. Woodcock, an unusual wader that lives in woodlands, has also been recorded in Derrycrag. The best way to see Woodcock is to walk around a damp wood in early summer and look out for them doing their dusk 'roding' display flight. Woodcock patrol just above the tree tops, alternating high-pitched 'wizzik' calls with soft bass croaking.

The Woodford River flows through Derrycrag Wood and the relatively rare shrub, Bird Cherry, grows along the river in patches. Look out for the holy well and shrine that can be found in the heart of Derrycrag Wood.



*The Woodford River flows through Derrycrag Wood and into Lough Derg*

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*Holy Well and Shrine in Derrycrag Wood*



*Bird Cherry in flower*

## 5 Rosmore Pier, Co. Galway

SAT NAV 53.0173, -8.3109



*Reed swamp at Rosmore*



*Flowering Rush*

Rosmore is a fine quay in a very beautiful and secluded location. The long road down from the main road (R352) is highly scenic with the pastoral landscapes that characterise much of Lough Derg; good quality farmland with mature hedgerows and trees, many of which are Oak.

From the car park at the pier there are great views of the lake and fringing wetlands. Common Club-Rush dominates the watery wetlands around much of the lake and the beautiful Flowering Rush can be seen near the pier. Rosmore Pier is an excellent spot for bird-watching and fishing. During the winter it's a good place to look for wintering duck such as Teal, Tufted Duck, Pochard and Goldeneye. Great-crested and Little Grebes, Common Tern and Black-headed Gull are common during the breeding season in summer. Keep an eye out for otters offshore. The pier is sheltered by mature trees, Sessile Oak, Alder and Ash.



## 6 Coos-East Clare Way, Cos. Galway & Clare

SAT NAV 52.9783, -8.3734



46

The East Clare Way runs close to the western edge of Lough Derg in several locations, one of which is Coos in the foothills of the Slieve Aughties<sup>3</sup>. Parking is limited but ask locally for suggestions. A good starting point is just off the R352 (SAT NAV 52.9783, -8.3734). You can head inland (west of the road) along a trail and cross through conifer plantation and blanket bog. Good footwear is essential for this option. Alternatively you can walk east of the road (following the signs) and stay on the small back road that leads all the way to Whitegate Village, passing by woodland and wetland.

If you take the upland route, and are very lucky you may get a glimpse of a Hen Harrier, a large bird of prey which breeds in the Slieve Aughties in the summer

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.clarewalks.com/east-clare-way-page.html>

months (April-August). Watch out for the stunning aerial “skydancing” displays of the silvery grey males in April! Other birds that can be seen include the common woodland birds such as Tits, Treecreeper, Jay, Crossbill and upland birds such as the rare and elusive Merlin, our smallest falcon. Other species of interest that may be seen include Fallow Deer and Red Squirrel.



Walking the East Clare Way (Photo: Allan Mee)



Red Squirrel (Photo: Colin Stanley)

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## 7 Dromaan Harbour, Williamstown, Co. Clare

SAT NAV 52.9436, -8.3312



To find Dromaan Harbour, follow the signs for Williamstown Harbour from Whitegate Village and the first harbour you come to is a public harbour at Dromann, run by Inland Waterways Ireland (Williamstown Harbour is a bit further up the road). The winding road from the main road (R352) is highly scenic with many mature trees in the fields and hedgerows, and wonderful landscape views. The small harbour has a fine marina and sheltered picnic areas as it is

surrounded by mature trees (Alder, Ash, Scots Pine and Willow). There are great views across Lough Derg from the harbour and further along the road. Wetlands fringe the lake, dominated by the Common Club Rush.

The harbour is a good location for birdwatching with ducks such as Tufted Duck, Mallard, Teal, Wigeon and Goldeneye to be seen in winter, along with Great-crested and Little Grebes, Coot and Cormorant in summer. Listen out for the buzzing song of Sedge Warblers among the reeds. White-tailed Sea Eagles often fish in the harbour and perch on trees along the shoreline. Otters are occasionally seen along the lake shore. Look out for damselflies such as the Common Spreadwing and Common Bluet.



*Scots Pine*

There are a few local walking routes in the Williamstown area that highlight the beautiful watery and pastoral landscapes in this area, and the rich cultural and built heritage<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://walks.iwai.ie/derg/whitegate.shtml>

## 8 Church Bay, Co. Clare

SAT NAV 52.9325, -8.3583

Church Bay is a short distance from Dromaan Harbour and also worth a visit. There are lovely views of the small islands in the Bay, Church Island and Pingroe Islands, and the beautiful old graveyard of Clonrush. The Bay is named after an old parish church that once stood within the graveyard but has long been in ruins. Extensive reed swamps provide good habitat for wildfowl such as Moorhen, Coot, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe and Mallard.

50



Extensive wetland in Church Bay (Photo: Allan Mee)



Moorhen (Photo: Tom Cuffe)

## 9 Mountshannon, Co. Clare

SAT NAV 52.9292, -8.4291



51

Mountshannon is a lively village with a bustling pier, marina, swimming area and park. The star attraction in Mountshannon is undoubtedly the White-tailed Eagle. A Bird Viewing and Information Point run by the local community is situated on the pier from which nesting White-tailed Sea Eagles can often be spotted in the summer. During the breeding season, the Bird Viewing Information Point, provides information on the birds, and binoculars and telescopes are available to use. Mountshannon is one of only a few places in Ireland that Eagles can be seen nesting.



Mountshannon pier is also an excellent spot to observe other waterbirds including Great-crested and Little Grebes, Common Tern, ducks including Tufted Duck, Teal, Merganser, Wigeon and Goldeneye, various gulls including the rare Mediterranean Gull, Common Sandpiper, Kingfisher and Cormorant. Mute Swans gather in late summer. Whimbrel pass through in late spring when their trilling calls can be heard especially on migration north at night. There is also a park in the village, Aistear, which is beautifully landscaped with many trees and shrubs, and has a fantastic willow sculpture maze.

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*White-tailed Sea Eagle chick (Photo: Allan Mee)*

## 10 Inis Cealtra, Co. Clare

SAT NAV 52.9158, -8.4499



*View of Inis Cealtra (Photo: Velma Mercer)*

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Inis Cealtra or Holy Island is located in the south-western end of Lough Derg, just south of Mountshannon and at the entrance to Scarriff Bay. It can be accessed by using the licensed operator from Mountshannon Harbour. Boat trips can be arranged through East Clare Heritage Tours.<sup>5</sup>



*Ruins on Iniscealtra (Photo: Allan Mee)*

<sup>5</sup> <http://eastclareheritage.com/holy-island/>



Inis Cealtra is famous as the site of a 7th century monastery founded by St. Caimin and sacked by the Vikings in 836 and 922. The 25m round tower is the dominant feature on the island and can be seen from miles around. Tufted Duck, Mallard, Teal and Coot can be seen on the boat trip to the island as well as Great-crested and Little Grebe. Look out also for the spectacular White-tailed Sea Eagle which nests nearby in Mountshannon Bay. On the island itself common garden and woodland birds can be seen and heard including Long-tailed Tits, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Song Thrush, Chaffinch, Robin, and Blue Tit. In winter and spring, flocks of Lapwing, Golden Plover and Whimbrel on passage can be seen or heard.

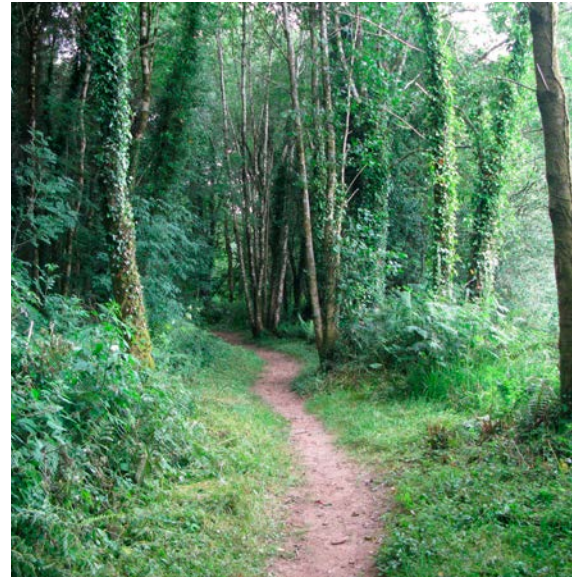
54



Lapwing (Photo: Eamon Brennan)

## 11 Woodpark, Co. Clare

SAT NAV 52.9335, -8.4550



55

Woodpark is a Coillte-owned broadleaf and conifer woodland with a variety of trees including Spruce, Oak, Ash, Beech, Holly, Birch and Sycamore. The wood has four walking trails to explore, the longest of which, the The Long Walk, takes about an hour. Woodland flowers such

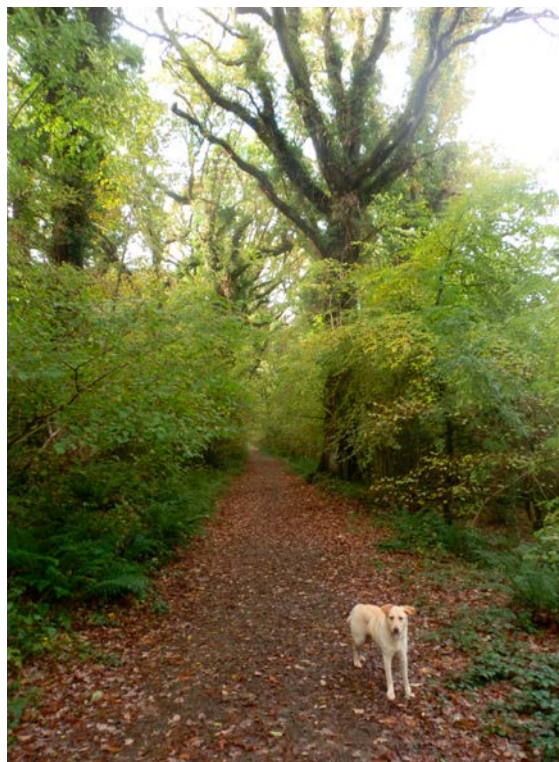
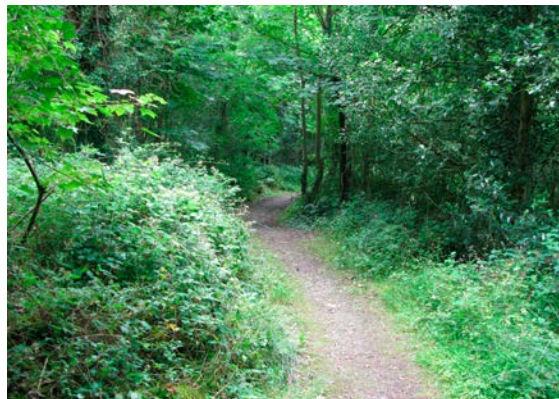
as Bluebells, Wild Garlic, Wood Sorrel and Enchanter's nightshade appear in spring and early summer. Typical woodland birds such as Tits, Treecreeper, Jay and Sparrowhawk can be seen and heard. Red Squirrel can sometimes be spotted and the keen observer might catch a glimpse of the resident Pine Marten. There are small streams running through the wood and patches of wet woodland with Willow and Alder.



Bluebells

## 12 Raheen Wood, Co. Clare SAT

NAV 52.8937, -8.5319



Raheen Wood (Photo: Allan Mee)



Raheen Wood is located just outside Tuamgraney village and is best known as the home of the “Brian Boru Oak”, reputedly over 1,000 years old and the oldest Oak tree in Ireland. The tree is 25m tall and has a girth of nearly 8m! Raheen Wood is a mixed woodland with conifers, Oak, Ash, Birch, Holly and Hazel. There are trails running through the wood that can be explored and enjoyed.

Some of Raheen Wood is managed as a Community Wood. Conifers were cleared in this area and native trees such as Oak, Rowan and Ash were planted as part of an innovative community project. Interpretive signage for the wood was also erected for the benefit of the local community and visitors.

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Raheen Wood is home to many woodland birds including Crossbill, Tits, Treecreeper, Jay and Sparrowhawk amongst others. Lucky walkers may also spot a Red Squirrel, Pine Marten or a Badger Sett. Keep an eye out for woodland and woodland edge butterflies such as Speckled Wood, Wood White and the rare Purple Hairstreak.

Raheen Wood can be accessed from the R463. Parking is available but limited.



Brian Boru oak (Photo: Gordon Daly)

### 13 Aughinish Wood, Co. Clare

SAT NAV 52.8870, -8.4313

Aughinish Wood is an out of the way woodland right on the shore of Lough Derg on a small headland. The intrepid explorer will be rewarded if they make the trip to this secluded and beautiful lakeside woodland. This Coillte-owned wood is a mix of Conifers, Oak and Alder, and there is quite a bit of Scots pine, especially along the shoreline and on small islands just offshore. There appears to have been woodland at Aughinish for some time as it is marked as wooded on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of the site (1842). The wood holds most of the common woodland birds, Tits, Treecreeper, Jay and Sparrowhawk. Red Squirrel, Badger, Pine Marten and the Fallow Deer also inhabit the woodland. There are no way-marked trails but there are small paths running through the woods.

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Alder and Scot's pine on the lakeshore



## 14 Ballycuggaran Forest & Rinnaman Point, Co. Clare

SAT NAV 52.8346, -8.4638



The Ballycuggaran Forest Recreation Area<sup>6</sup> and Rinnaman Point are just 3km north of Killaloe in County Clare. There is a public carpark for the swimming area at Rinnaman Point, known locally as Two Mile Gate, just next to the University of Limerick Activity Centre. You can access the swimming area, the woodland along the point and the trails in Ballycuggaran from this carpark although there is additional parking within the wood.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.coillteoutdoors.ie/uploads/tx\\_r3coilltere creationsites/ballycuggaran\\_crag\\_wood\\_walk.pdf](http://www.coillteoutdoors.ie/uploads/tx_r3coilltere creationsites/ballycuggaran_crag_wood_walk.pdf)



Rinnaman Point (Photo: Allan Mee)

There are excellent views of the lake from the small bay at Rinnaman. You can wander from the carpark through the lakeside woodland on the Point and enjoy the sights and sounds of the woods and the lake. If you would like a more challenging walk, and want to explore the uplands, there are two trails that run through Ballycuggaran across the road from the parking for the swimming area. The Crag Wood Walk (6km) heads up Crag Hill on the lower slopes of the Slieve Bearnagh Mountains. There are some spectacular views of the lake from this trail. The main trees to be seen en route are Spruce, Larch, Fir, Oak, Beech and Ash. The higher slopes are cloaked in heather-rich heathland, blanket bog, and swathes of bracken. Woodland birds such as Crossbill, Tits, Treecreeper, Jay and Woodcock can be seen and heard in Ballycuggaran Wood. Red Squirrel, Pine Marten, Badger, Fallow Deer and the occasional Wild Goat live in the woods too.

## 15 Killaloe-Ballina, Cos Clare-Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.8100, -8.4491



Killaloe and Ballina are towns with a rich history and heritage located on either side of the River Shannon as it exits Lough Derg in Counties Clare and Tipperary

respectively. Parking is available in both towns, and just adjacent to the bridge in Killaloe where there are good views of the River Shannon and the southern reaches of the lake. The line of the old railway line in Ballina provides a short walk by the Washer's Women Bridge to Riverside Park, which is a sanctuary for wildlife and where there is interpretive signage. In Killaloe, a board walk on the lake runs along a former canal built in 1709 to bypass the rapids on the river but became redundant in 1929 as water levels were raised with the building of the hydroelectric power station downriver. For the long distance walkers it is possible to walk all the way to Limerick from Killaloe-Ballina on the Lough Derg Way along the banks of the River Shannon. This highly scenic walk runs through wonderful wetlands and highly scenic countryside, and offers more views of waterfowl. While in Killaloe-Ballina, look out for birds such as Cormorant, Mallard, and Tufted Duck in summer, and Goldeneye in winter.



Canal at Killaloe

**16** Castletown (The Lookout), Co. Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.8792, -8.3935



*View from The Lookout with Castlough Woods in the distance*

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The Lookout, a viewing area north of Killaloe-Ballina on the R494 on the eastern side of the lake, is not to be missed on any tour of Lough Derg as here you will find spectacular views of the lake. Some of the islands on the western shore can be seen including Inis Cealtra or Holy Island, Castlough Woods to the north hugging the shore of the lake, and the Arra Mountains and Slieve Bearnagh to the south

White-tailed Sea Eagles have been sighted in this area and a congregation of Mute Swans is often visible in the foreground at Castlough. The Lookout is a good starting point to explore the Arra Mountains as you can join the Lough Derg Way here and head up into the hills. There are outstanding views of Lough Derg from the trail and you will encounter woodland, blanket bog and heathland as the trail rises.

**17** Castlough Woods, Co. Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.9018, -8.3824



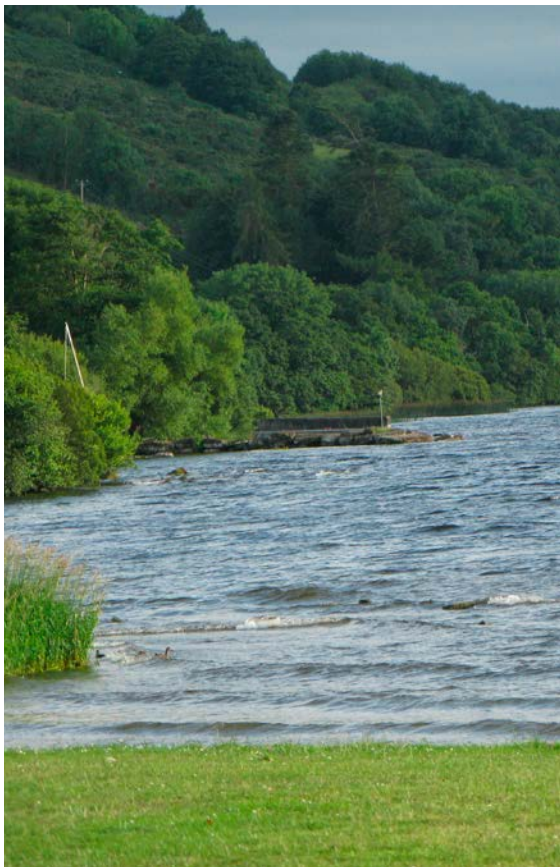
Castlough Wood is another out of the way woodland right of the shore of Lough Derg. The wood is a former Deer Park (an enclosed area of land for keeping a herd of deer) as shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map for the area. It is enclosed by a high dry stone wall. Castlough Wood comprises over 50ha of mixed woodland that can be explored by following the network of forest trails through the woods and along the lake shore<sup>7</sup>. The woods are a mix of conifers and broadleaves including Beech, Norway Spruce, Ash, Oak, Alder, Birch, Cherry, Scots Pine and Douglas Fir. The strip of ground between the Deer Park and the lakeshore is wooded with mature Oak, Hazel and Holly with a scattering of Wild Cherry, Crab Apple and Yew. Alder and a few Buckthorn are also present along the shore.

65

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.coillteoutdoors.ie/uploads/tx\\_r3coilltere creationsites/CastloughSiteMap.pdf](http://www.coillteoutdoors.ie/uploads/tx_r3coilltere creationsites/CastloughSiteMap.pdf)

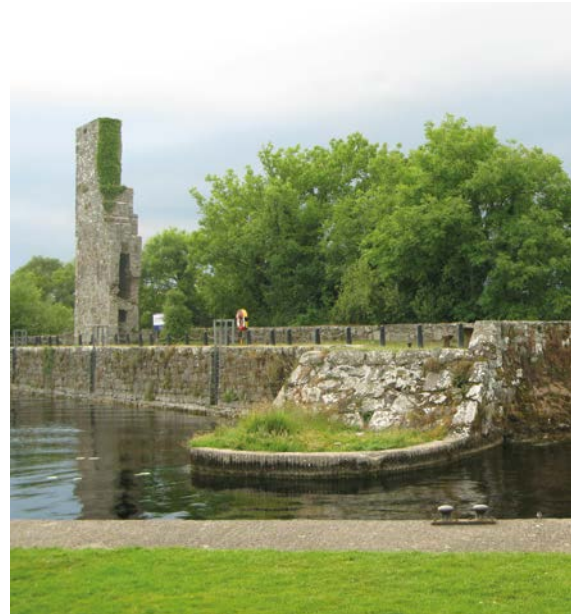


Castlelough Woods are popular with birdwatchers as there is access to many quiet spots with views of the lake and waterbirds, and woodland birds can be heard and sometimes seen while strolling through the woods. Castlelough is home to several woodland birds including Tits, Treecreeper, Jay, Sparrowhawk and Woodcock. Summer migrants include Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Spotted Flycatcher. Red Squirrels have also been recorded in the wood. Duck such as Mallard, Teal and Tufted Duck can be seen offshore along with Grebes and Mute Swan. There is a swimming area near the entrance to the woods.



## 18 Garrykennedy, Co. Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.9051, -8.3450



*Old pier at Garrykennedy*

Garrykennedy is a beautiful village on the eastern shore of Lough Derg, just north of Portroe, with a fine harbour and marina. Garrykennedy has great views across Lough Derg to the Clare shore and north to Ryan's Point. Breeding Great-crested and Little Grebes and duck such as Teal and Mallard are commonly seen as well as the ubiquitous Coot. Other ducks such as Goldeneye and Wigeon can be seen in winter. The lake is fringed with woodland and wetland on either side of Garrykennedy harbour, greatly enhancing the local landscape. Walkers can enjoy these watery woods and wetlands by following the Lough Derg Way either north or south of the village. The woodland along the shore contains a mix of trees including Scots Pine, Norway Spruce, Larch, Oak, Ash, Rowan, Birch, Holly, Willow and Alder.



Heron (Photo: Eamon Brennan)

## 19 Youghal Bay, Co. Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.8987, -8.3101

Youghal Bay is a large bay on eastern shore of Lough Derg and a renowned angling location. Parking is available in Youghal Village. Youghal Bay supports small populations of breeding Great-crested and Little Grebes, as well as Coot and various types of ducks which can be seen from the small harbour. Goldeneye, as well as more common ducks, such as Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Pochard, Mallard and Teal, can be spotted here in winter. The elusive Otter can sometimes be seen. There are extensive reed swamp wetlands in the Bay, particularly west of the harbour where several rivers and streams flow into the lake. You can walk from the village centre eastwards along the Lough Derg Way and through a landscape of rolling farmland, wet woodland and wetlands. The area on either side of the Newtown River (1.5km east of Youghal Village) is known locally as 'The Callows' reflecting the vast swathes of reed swamp and wet willow woods in the inner reaches of Youghal Bay and at the mouth of Youghal and Newtown Rivers.



Reedswamp



## 20 Ryan's Point, Co. Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.9192, -8.2998

The long distance walking route, the Lough Derg Way, can also be accessed at Ryan's Point (note: limited parking). The route is particularly scenic at the Point as there is a fringe of woodland along the shore of the lake. Ryan's Point lies in the townland of Garraunfadda or Garrán Fada meaning "the long grove", possibly reflecting a long history of tree cover along the lakeshore. Common garden and woodland edge birds including Long-tailed Tit and Jay can be seen along the trail. Offshore Grebes can often be seen in summer and winter.

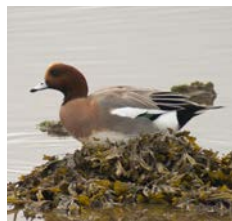
## 21 Dromineer Bay, Co. Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.9250, -8.2789

Dromineer is a picturesque village on the eastern shore of Lough Derg. Situated on the mouth of the Nenagh River (the name in Irish Drom Inbhir means 'ridge of the river mouth'), there are great views of the lake from the quay. Water fowl to look out for in Dromineer Bay include Great-crested and Little Grebes, Tufted Duck, Mallard, Teal, Wigeon and Coot. The Slí Eala walking route can be accessed from Dromineer. The route follows the Nenagh River all the way to Nenagh Town (10 km). It is a highly scenic and peaceful walking route through rolling countryside. The Lough Derg Way starts (or ends!) in the village too and runs all the way to Limerick.



Mallard (Photo: Velma Mercer)



Wigeon (Photo: Tom Cuffe)

## 22 Luska Bay, Coolbaun, Co. Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.9681, -8.2668



Luska Bay is a quiet bay south-west of Coolbaun signposted from the main road (R493). The little road that runs along the edge of Luska Bay is highly scenic with glimpses of lake and wetlands, fields, woods and hedgerows. There is a small parking area in front of the playground right on the lakeshore. There is a vast extent of wetland in the bay with Common Reed, Canary Reed, Common Club Rush, Purple Loosestrife, Water-mint and Angelica, and many more herbs, rushes, sedges and grasses.



Reed swamp with Angelica

The bay looks out on the island of Illaunmore and Cameron. Common Terns and Black-headed Gulls breed nearby and can be seen foraging in the bay. Coot, Mallard, and Teal are common with Wigeon, Gadwall, Pochard and Goldeneye to be seen in winter. Common Sandpiper, Sedge Warbler and Reed Bunting can also be seen or heard in summer and the resident but elusive Water Rail. Listen out for the reeling insect-like song of the Grasshopper Warbler over the reeds too. Great-crested and Little Grebes nest on the lake shore. Hen Harriers occasionally hunt over the marsh in winter. Buzzards breed locally while White-tailed Sea Eagles occasionally roost on offshore islands such as Cameron and Islandbrien. Keep a look out for otters along the shore too.



Grasshopper Warbler (Photo: Tom Cuffe)

## 23 Cominchas Forest, Coolbaun, Co. Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.9964, -8.2633



Cominchas Wood is a Coillte property just north of Coolbaun. The woods occupy a small limestone hill and can be easily explored by following the White trail – a 50 minute walk which takes in the main viewing point – or the Green trail – which takes about 20 minutes. There are extensive panoramic views over Lough Derg from the highest point of the walking circuit. The woods are composed of a mix of broadleaf and conifer plantation. Much of the conifer plantation has been felled and is being replaced with native trees such as Oak and Ash. Throughout these woods there are stands of Ash, Oak, Rowan, Hazel and Beech scattered among the conifer plantation. Cominchas is home to typical woodland birds including Tits, Warblers (summer), Treecreepers, Jay and Sparrowhawk. Keep an eye out for Red Squirrel too or Badger setts. Old woodland wild flowers may be seen in spring, including Bluebells, Primroses and Violets.





Coal Tit (Photo: Ruairi Goodwin)



Ringlet (Photo: Tom Cuffe)

## 24 Terryglass, Co. Tipperary

SAT NAV 53.0595, -8.2071



Terryglass is a picture-postcard village on the north-eastern shore of Lough Derg with a rich built and natural heritage. In Irish, Tír Dhá Ghlas means “land of the two streams”. Many waterbirds can be seen from the busy harbour including Common Tern, Black-headed Gull, Great-crested and Little Grebes, Cormorant, and ducks such as Tufted Duck, Wigeon, Goldeneye and Pochard in winter. White-tailed Sea Eagles are seen on occasion. The village is landscaped beautifully with trees and grassland, and there are extensive wetlands dominated by Common Club-rush along the shore. There is a ‘Little Wood Trail’ through the trees down by the harbour that reveals a spectacular view of the lake.



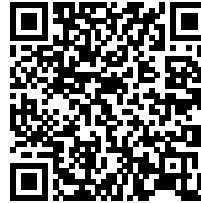
Old church in Terryglass



Black-headed Gull (Photo: Tom Cuffe)

## Further information

### Lough Derg on the Shannon Heritage Trail (iphone and Android phone apps)



[www.itunes.apple.com/sv/app/lough-derg-heritage-trail/id647179890?l=en&mt=8](http://www.itunes.apple.com/sv/app/lough-derg-heritage-trail/id647179890?l=en&mt=8)



[www.play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cyclingld&feature=search\\_result#?t=W251bGwsMSwxLDEsImNvbS5jeWNsaW5nbGQiXQ](http://www.play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cyclingld&feature=search_result#?t=W251bGwsMSwxLDEsImNvbS5jeWNsaW5nbGQiXQ)

### Walking routes/ cycle ways/ driving routes/ kayak trail

[www.walks.iwai.ie/derg/](http://www.walks.iwai.ie/derg/)  
[www.clarewalks.com/east-clare-way-page.html](http://www.clarewalks.com/east-clare-way-page.html)  
[www.irishtrails.ie/trail/East-Clare-Way/16/](http://www.irishtrails.ie/trail/East-Clare-Way/16/)  
[www.everytrail.com/guide/east-clare-way](http://www.everytrail.com/guide/east-clare-way)  
[www.everytrail.com/guide/lough-derg-way](http://www.everytrail.com/guide/lough-derg-way)  
[www.everytrail.com/guide/lough-derg-cycleway](http://www.everytrail.com/guide/lough-derg-cycleway)  
[www.everytrail.com/guide/lough-derg-drive](http://www.everytrail.com/guide/lough-derg-drive)  
[www.walks.iwai.ie/derg/whitegate.shtml](http://www.walks.iwai.ie/derg/whitegate.shtml)  
[www.walks.iwai.ie/derg/rinnaman.shtml](http://www.walks.iwai.ie/derg/rinnaman.shtml)  
[www.everytrail.com/guide/lough-derg-canoe-trail](http://www.everytrail.com/guide/lough-derg-canoe-trail)  
[www.everytrail.com/guide/lough-derg-cruising-trail](http://www.everytrail.com/guide/lough-derg-cruising-trail)



## Woodland walks

[www.coillteoutdoors.ie](http://www.coillteoutdoors.ie)  
[www.coillteoutdoors.ie/uploads/tx\\_r3coilltere creationsites/ CastleloughSiteMap.pdf](http://www.coillteoutdoors.ie/uploads/tx_r3coilltere creationsites/ CastleloughSiteMap.pdf)  
[www.irishtrails.ie/Trail/Ballycuggaran-Crag-Wood-Walk](http://www.irishtrails.ie/Trail/Ballycuggaran-Crag-Wood-Walk)  
[www.everytrail.com/guide/portumna-forest-park-woodland-trails](http://www.everytrail.com/guide/portumna-forest-park-woodland-trails)

## Wildlife

[www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)  
[www.birdwatchireland.ie](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie)  
[www.butterflyconservation.ie](http://www.butterflyconservation.ie)  
[www.irishwildflowers.net](http://www.irishwildflowers.net)  
[www.irishwildlifetrust.ie](http://www.irishwildlifetrust.ie)  
[www.treecouncil.ie](http://www.treecouncil.ie)  
[www.fisheriesireland.ie](http://www.fisheriesireland.ie)  
[www.heritagecouncil.ie](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie)  
[www.loughderggardens.com](http://www.loughderggardens.com)  
[www.irishseedsavers.ie](http://www.irishseedsavers.ie)  
[www.goldeneagle.ie](http://www.goldeneagle.ie)  
[www.mountshannoneagles.ie](http://www.mountshannoneagles.ie)  
[www.facebook.com/mountshannoneagles](https://www.facebook.com/mountshannoneagles)  
[www.celtnet.org](http://www.celtnet.org)

## Lough Derg tourism

[www.discoverireland.ie/lakelands](http://www.discoverireland.ie/lakelands)  
[www.iwai.ie](http://www.iwai.ie)  
[www.waterwaysireland.org](http://www.waterwaysireland.org)

## Identification guides

- Brooks, S. and Lewington, R. 2002. Field Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Great Britain and Ireland. Second Revised Edition, British Wildlife Publishing, Hook.
- Nelson, B. and Thompson, R. 2004. The Natural History of Ireland's Dragonflies. MAGNI Publication No 013, National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland, Belfast.
- Rose, F. 2006. The Wild Flower Key: How to identify wildflowers, trees and shrubs in Britain and Ireland. Frederik Warne.
- Sterry, P. 2010. Collins Complete Guide to Irish Wildlife. Collins. HarperCollins, London.
- Shackleton, J. and Nash, J. 2004. A Guide to the Butterflies of Ireland. The Dublin Naturalists' Field Club.
- Wilson, J. and Carmody, M. 2013. The Birds of Ireland: A Field Guide. The Collins Press, Cork.

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**Cover photograph:** White-tailed Sea Eagle over Lough Derg (Valerie O'Sullivan)