

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: SLIGO/LEITRIM UPLANDS SPA

SITE CODE: 004187

The Sligo/Leitrim Uplands SPA is located north-east of the town of Sligo in the mountain ranges of Ben Bulbin, Arroo and Cope's Mountain/Crockauns. The site straddles the Co. Sligo/Co. Leitrim border. The site includes six separate lengths of cliffs in these ranges, including those of King's Mountain, Benbulbin, Benwisikin, Gleniff, Truskmore, Tievebaun, Glenade, Glencar, Arroo Mountain and Cope's Mountain/Crockauns. The upper boundary of the site is taken to be 50 m from the cliff top except in the King's Mountain area, above Glencar Lough, where an expanse of suitable foraging habitat *c.* 200 m from the cliff top is included. These uplands are formed of Carboniferous limestone, capped in places by shales. They stand on a high plateau, 300-450 m above the surrounding countryside, and the edges form lofty cliffs from 15 to 300 m in height. Areas of scree occur below the cliffs on slopes of 40-50°.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Chough and Peregrine.

Inland cliffs and scree slopes are the predominant habitats of the site. Other habitats present on the site include heath, blanket bog, grassland, scrub, woodland and streams.

The cliffs hold an internationally important population of breeding Chough (14 breeding pairs recorded from the site in the 1992 survey and 15 in the 2002/03 survey). Chough forage mostly in unimproved, closely grazed grassland and flocks of up to 29 birds have been seen. The land on the plateau is, for the most part, vegetated by heath and blanket bog which is largely unsuitable habitat for Chough. The suitable grassland occurs mainly on the steep slopes below the cliffs.

The extensive uplands on the plateau provide excellent habitat for Peregrine; the cliffs are ideal nesting sites and four pairs were recorded here in 2002. Small numbers of Red Grouse are also known to occur within the site.

The Sligo/Leitrim Uplands SPA is of considerable ornithological significance, being a site of international importance for Chough and of national importance for Peregrine; both species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.