

Duncormick habitats



Introduction

This leaflet is an introduction to the wildlife habitats found in the village of Duncormick (Irish Grid: S 92 09) on the south coast of County Wexford^{1 & 2}.



Location map: Screenshot from <https://maps.wexford.ie/imaps/>. OSI copyright Permit No 9162.

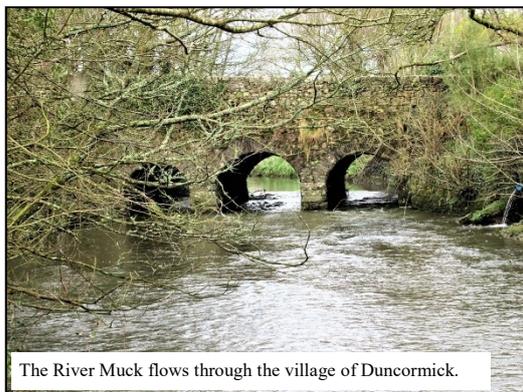
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Limits of the village

The village of Duncormick is defined as the area enclosed by the 50km speed limit signs on the village's six approach roads. The main road through the village is regional road R736 that runs from Carrick (west) to Bridgetown (east). That road has three sideroads branching off it. These roads lead south-west to Cullenstown, north to Taghmon with a byroad, and south-east to Kilmore Quay.

What is a habitat?

A habitat is a place or area where a plant or animal is likely to be found, for example, rocky seashores are the habitat of the Common Periwinkle whereas woodlands are the habitat of the Red Squirrel. One would be surprised to see a squirrel on a rocky seashore or to find a periwinkle on a tree in a woodland. Most plants and animals tend to be adapted to live in a small number of habitats.

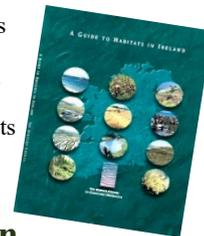


The River Muck flows through the village of Duncormick.

The Fossitt's framework

Julie Fossitt's book³ sets out the standard scheme used for identifying, describing and classifying wildlife habitats in Ireland. The book classifies 117 habitats within a hierarchical framework as a first-step approach for general habitat recording in a

standardised way. Fossitt habitats featured in this leaflet are shown **bold red**. The Fossitt framework contains guidance on the links between a number of Irish habitats and the habitats annexed in the EU Habitats Directive.



Habitat conservation

The 1992 EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) sets out obligations on Member States to protect vulnerable habitats. Annex 1 of the Directive lists over 200 natural habitats found in the territories of Member States that are of Community interest and that require the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)^{4 & 5}. Fifty-eight of these Annex 1 habitats occur in Ireland⁶; 27 of them on the South Wexford Coast. The legal requirements of the EU Habitats Directive are transposed into Irish law by several statutory instruments, notably S I No 477 of 2011⁷.

Natura 2000 sites

Natura 2000 is a network of some 26,000 habitats and nature conservation areas throughout the territories of the 28 member states of the European Union (EU). On-going development of the network is the centrepiece of EU policy with regard to nature and biodiversity. The network is made up of

- ◆ Special Protection Areas (SPAs) established under the EU Birds Directive, and
- ◆ Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) established under the Habitats Directive.



The aim of the Natura 2000 network is to contribute towards the conservation of biodiversity through the protection of natural habitats and the wild flora and fauna that these habitats support.

Ballyteige Burrow

The nearest Natura 2000 sites to Duncormick are the following two overlapping sites

- Ballyteige Burrow Special Protection Area⁸ (SPA) No IE004020 designated for 'Wetland and Waterbirds' in general, and specifically for the following seven species of wild birds: Light-bellied Brent Goose, Shelduck, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit, and Bar-tailed Godwit, and
- Ballyteige Burrow candidate Special Area of Conservation⁹ (cSAC) No IE000696 selected for 14 habitats one of which is 'Estuaries' [Code No 1130]. The Ballyteige Burrow estuary extends upriver almost to Duncormick village.



Maidenhair Spleenwort, a small fern, grows on old walls around the village.

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Habitats in Duncormick village

Freshwater habitats

The River Muck, also known as the Duncormick River, is the most important habitat in Duncormick village. The river rises near Taghmon. At the bridge in Duncormick village [1 in the aerial image right; also image below] the decrease in gradient as the river approaches the low-lying coastline causes the

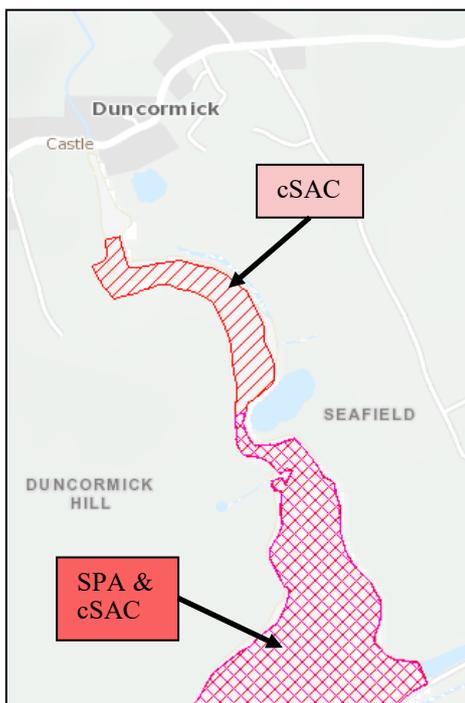


flow to become sluggish and for silt and other fine sediments to be deposited (**Depositing/lowland rivers FW2**). On high tides, seawater floods into the river making the water

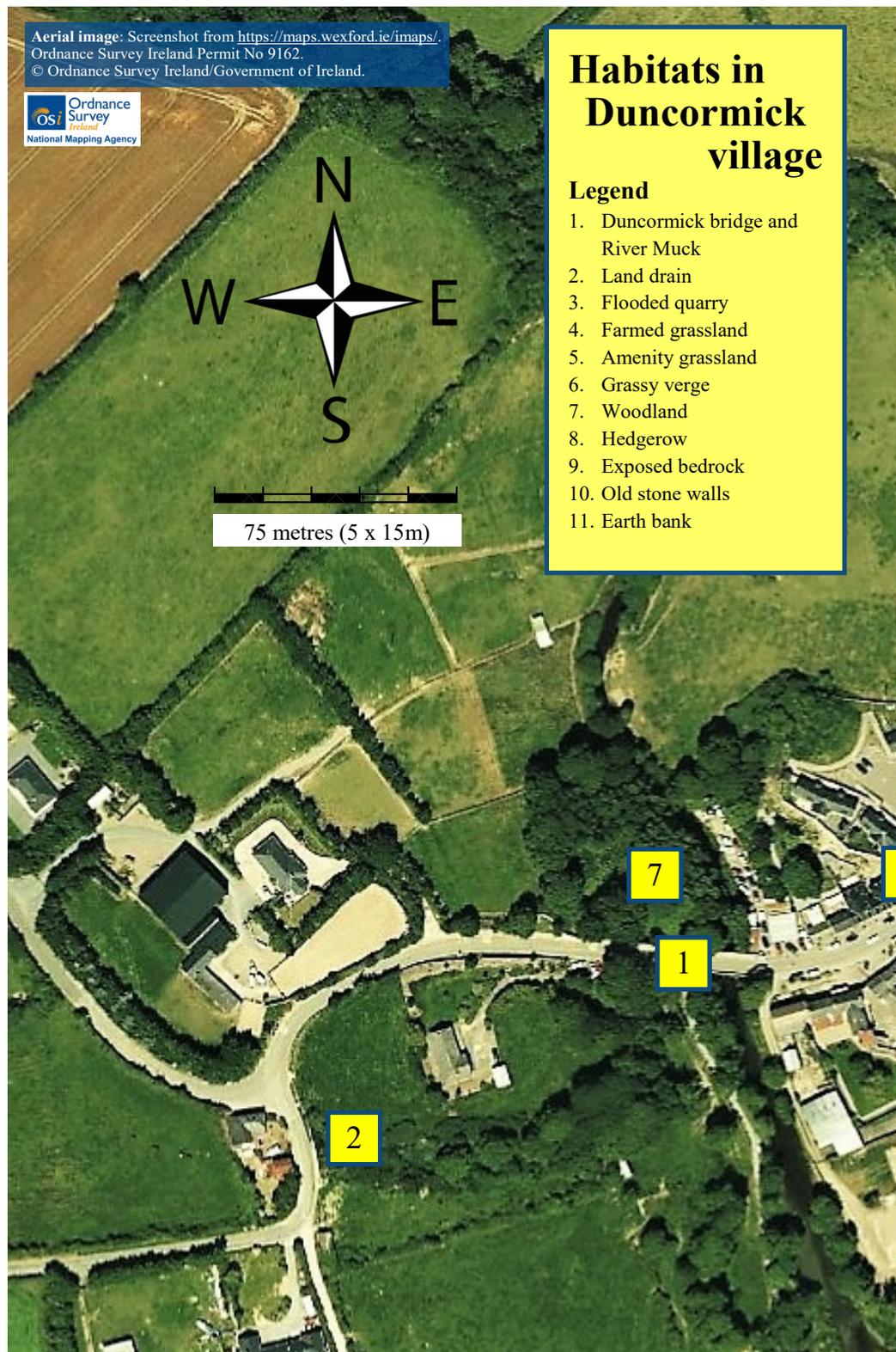
brackish, that is, it contains a mixture of freshwater and seawater (**Tidal rivers CW2**). The tidal river finally enters the estuary (**Estuaries MW4**), the semi-enclosed body of water behind the dunes at Ballyteige Burrow, before the estuarine waters flow into the Celtic Sea at Cullenstown. The estuary is a protected habitat and is an important feeding area for wild birds.

The overlapping SPA/cSAC (pink cross-hatching, below) extends up the estuary of the River Muck to the flooded quarry at Seafield some 700m downstream of Duncormick bridge. The cSAC (upward diagonal orange lines, below) extends further up the estuary, includes St Clómaun's Well and stops approximately 180m downstream of Duncormick bridge south of the island that lies in the middle of the river channel opposite the birdwatching hide.

The River Muck is a natural water-course,



Natura 2000 sites: Screenshot from <http://webgis.npws.ie/npwsviewer/>. OSI copyright Permit No 9162. © Ordnance Survey Ireland/Government of Ireland.



Habitats in Duncormick village

Legend

1. Duncormick bridge and River Muck
2. Land drain
3. Flooded quarry
4. Farmed grassland
5. Amenity grassland
6. Grassy verge
7. Woodland
8. Hedgerow
9. Exposed bedrock
10. Old stone walls
11. Earth bank

drains dug in farmland surrounding the village are entirely artificial in origin (**Drainage ditches FW4**) [2]. Depending on the time of year and the amount of rainfall, these drains may be permanently or seasonally dry or may contain either standing or flowing water. Most of the surface water draining from the village and surrounding farmland ends up in the River Muck

The only other significant waterbody in the village is a flooded, former limestone quarry know locally as Sinnott's' Quarry Hole (**Other artificial lakes and ponds FL8**) [3].

St Clómaun's Well is a natural upwelling of calcium-rich groundwater issuing from the

underlying Ballysteen Formation limestone rock formed some 350 million years ago (**Calcareous springs FP1**).

Grassland and Marsh

Grasslands around the village are largely artificial in that they are managed, often intensively, by grazing, mowing, fertiliser application, reseeding, drainage, etc. These grasslands may be used for farming (**Improved agricultural grassland GA1**) [4] or for amenity and/or landscape purposes (**Amenity grassland (improved) GA2**), for example, lawns and other short-sward grasslands [5]. The only grasslands in the

Habitats in Duncormick village



village that can be regarded as semi-natural are those that are subject to little or no management, for example, grassy roadside verges, the headlands of fields, neglected gardens, etc. (**Dry meadows and grassy verges GS2**) [6]. Freshwater marsh habitats associated with the River Muck are absent in the village as the river banks are steep with no adjoining floodplains, flood-meadows, riverside swamps, marshes or reedbeds.

Woodland and Scrub

The distinction between these two habitat types is that woodland is an area dominated by trees taller than 5m whereas scrub is an area

dominated by immature trees, shrubs, Brambles, Gorse and other woody plants less than 5m tall. The most significant woodland stand (**woodland W**) [7] in the village is located at Duncormick bridge. The tallest trees support a rookery with Rooks gathering in noisy groups as early as mid-February. The trees clothing the steep river bank near St Clómaun's Well are another very important stand and are in the Ballyteige Burrow Special Area of Conservation.

Scrub (**Scrub WS1**) in the village is usually dominated by Bramble. Linear strips of woodland are common field boundaries; they are classified as **Hedgerows WL1** [8] if they

are small or **Treelines WL2** if they are taller than 5m. Hawthorn, Gorse, Bramble and Whitethorn are common wayside hedgerow plants. The most significant hedgerow in the village borders St Anne's Villas across the road from the houses. Planted, non-native conifers are common throughout the village.

Exposed rock

Excavations at a vacant building site on the main street of the village [9] have an exposure of the Duncormick Conglomerate Formation (**Exposed siliceous rock ERI**). That formation is 83m thick, comprises grey and red conglomerates with subordinate sandstones

and minor mudstones. The parent sediments were deposited some 350 million years ago¹⁰.

Disturbed ground

Disturbed ground (**Spoil and bare ground ED2**) is a transient habitat often associated with building and/or drainage works; once the disturbance ceases, vegetation rapidly colonises the freshly exposed surfaces.

Cultivated and built land

Farmland habitats are difficult to map in that they regularly change from season to season or from year to year. Lands may support farm crops such as cereals (**Arable crops BC1**) or vegetables (**Horticultural land BC2**); the latter habitat includes greenhouses and polythene tunnels. If the land is being prepared for cultivation but does not yet support a crop it is **Tilled land BC3**.

Regularly-maintained ornamental beds and borders with flowers and dwarf shrubs are a prominent feature in gardens and amenity areas around the village (**Flower beds and borders BC4**).

Random rubble stone walls are very common and attractive features throughout the village. Most are of relatively recent origin and have cemented joints and pointing that support little or no wildlife. Older stone walls with crumbling lime mortar, either free-standing or retaining a bank, support a greater diversity of wildlife (**Stone wall and other stonework BL1**). The best examples are Duncormick bridge [1] and the walls around the site of the former school [10] near the speed limit sign on the Taghmon road.

Earth banks BL2 [11] form a distinct habitat when the bank itself is the dominant feature rather than any hedgerow, trees or stone armouring the bank may support.

Buildings and artificial surfaces BL3 is a broad habitat type covering all domestic, agricultural, industrial and community structures together with associated tarmac and cement surfaces, roads, pavements, paths, tracks, driveways, car parks, sports grounds, etc. Since Duncormick is a village, this is the dominant habitat found there.

Summary

The most important habitats in the village are clustered around the River Muck. These habitats include the river itself, its associated woodlands and wetlands and the stonework on Duncormick bridge.

Old headstones in the cemetery at Duncormick chapel -of-ease support a diverse community of lichens. These plants growing on the headstones have no roots and absorb the water and minerals that they need directly from rain and the air.



The St Clómaun's Way riverside walk and nature trail is an excellent amenity advanced by the Duncormick Area Action Group and Tidy Towns Group. That nature walk recognises the importance of the significant habitats in the village, promotes them, presents them for public enjoyment and seeks to preserve and protect them.

Everyone using the wonderful amenity can contribute to conserving the biodiversity of the Duncormick area by following the Country Code (see below).

References

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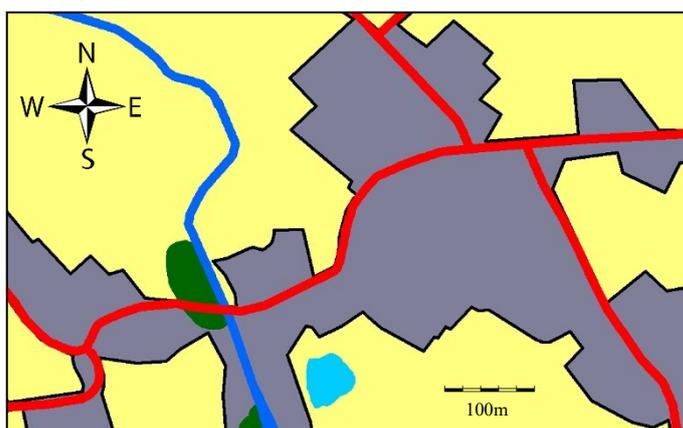
Follow the Country Code

Local people and residents are justifiably proud of their village and seek to preserve and protect its many amenities. Visitors to Duncormick are, of course, very welcome and can help conserve the biodiversity of the area by following the Country Code.

- Leave the area as you found it. Do nothing to destroy the amenities you have come to enjoy. Kill nothing but time; take nothing but photographs and memories.
- Take your rubbish home with you. Leave nothing but footprints.

Wildlife areas are managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). If you see any threats to wildlife report your concerns to Tony Murray, the local NPWS Conservation Ranger, e-mail Tony.Murray@chg.gov.ie, telephone (076) 100 2662.

Thank you.



Map of the main habitat types found in Duncormick village.

Grey = built and associated cultivated land. Red = the roads network. Yellow = farmland. Blue = River Muck (darker) and a pond (paler). Green = Woodland.