

Natura 2000

Natura 2000 is a network of sites designated to protect threatened species and habitats throughout the European Union (EU). With over 27,000 participating sites, it is the

largest coordinated network of protected areas in the world, extending across all 27 EU member states, both on land and at sea (<https://bit.ly/48G2EC4>).

In 1979, the Birds Directive (as amended in 2009) established an EU-wide protection regime for all bird species naturally occurring in the EU. It included classification by member states of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for 194 particularly threatened bird species and for all migratory birds.

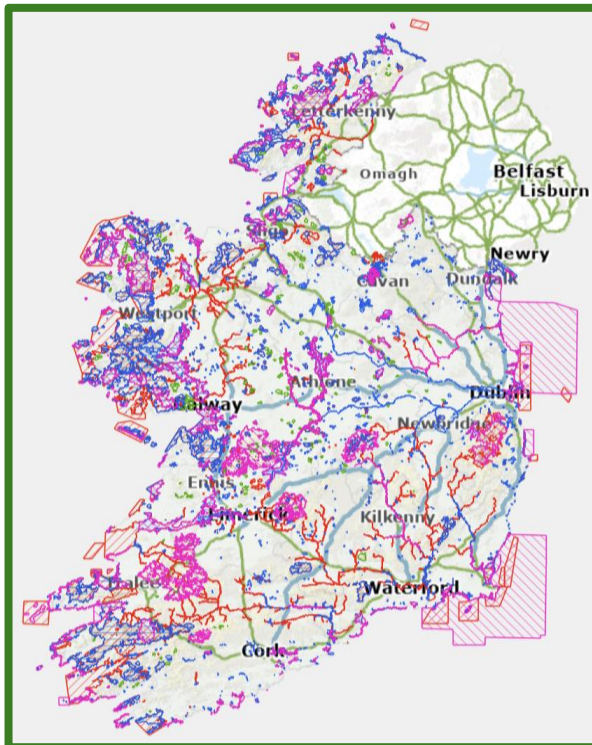
This approach was extended through the 1992 Habitats Directive, which also provided for the establishment of a representative system throughout the EU of legally protected habitats (places) and species other than birds. The areas are named Sites of Community Importance (SCI) and aim for the conservation of the 233 habitat types listed in Annex I of the Directive and the 900 plus species listed in Annex II. Member states identify SCIs and designate them as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).



SPAs under the Birds Directive and SACs under the Habitats Directive together make up the Natura 2000 network. The target of both directives (specifically set out within the Habitats Directive and echoed in the Birds Directive) is to ensure the long-term sustainability of the habitats and species they have been set up to protect.

Natura 2000 sites in Ireland

The requirement under the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive to designate Natura 2000 sites is transposed into national legislation by Part XAB, Section 177U of the *Planning and Development Act, 2000 S I No 30/2000* as amended, and Regulation 42 of the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2021*. Natura 2000 sites are known in Irish legislation as 'European sites'.



There are 604 Natura 2000 sites in the Republic of Ireland (IE) covering an area of 19,478km² or 13.2% of the country's land area (*Natura 2000 Barometer*, No 54, August 2022).

All 604 Natura 2000 sites found in Ireland are detailed on the website of the government's National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) at <https://www.npws.ie/> with site descriptions, maps, aerial photographs, legislation, etc.

The 14 Natura 2000 sites on the South Wexford Coast are tabulated below.

SWC Natura 2000 sites

Natura 2000 site: Name, status, and code hyperlink	Site area (ha)	Marine area	Statutory instrument	QIs	Hab	Pri	Spp	Bird	Mam
Hook Head SAC IE0000764	17,006.27	99.76%	509/2017	5	3		2		2
Bannow Bay SAC IE0000697	1,363.32	92.36%	592/2011	11	11	1			
Bannow Bay SPA IE0004033	1,287.86	79.32%	420/2018	14			14	14	
Keeragh Islands SPA IE0004118	80.00	97.02%	68/2010	1			1	1	
Ballyteige Burrow SAC IE0000696	660.24	39.07%	383/2010	14	14	2			
Ballyteige Burrow SPA IE0004020	703.09	44.66%	435/2021	8			8	8	
Saltee Islands SAC IE0000707	870.62	85.33%	274/2010	6	5		1		1
Saltee Islands SPA IE0004002	15,822.26	99.19%	300/2019	10			10	10	
Tacumshin Lake SAC IE0000709	476.17	87.55%	178/2010	5	5	1			
Tacumshin Lake SPA IE0004092	527.66	82.57%	422/2018	15			15	15	
Lady's Island Lake SAC IE0000704	478.60	4.13%	69/2010	3	3	1			
Lady's Island Lake SPA IE0004009	507.00	2.38%	292/2018	7			7	7	
Carnsore Point SAC IE0002269	8,736.19	99.99%	530/2016	3	2		1		1
Seas off Wexford SPA IE0004237	3,054km ²	100%	Pending	20			20	20	

Table 1. Natura 2000 sites on the South Wexford Coast.

(Sources: <https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/> and <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>)

Abbreviations used in Table 1

SAC = Special Area of Conservation

SPA = Special Protection Area

QIs = Number of Qualifying Interests of the site.

Hab = Number of habitats that are Qualifying Interests of the site.

Pri = Number of priority habitats that are Qualifying Interests of the site.

Spp = Number of species that are Qualifying Interests of the site.

Bird = Number of bird species that are Qualifying Interests of the site.

Mam = Number of mammal species that are Qualifying Interests of the site.



The fourteen sites on the **South Wexford Coast** comprise the following places:-

- Five places with dual designation (SAC + SPA) (Bannow Bay, Ballyteige Burrow, Saltee Islands, Tacumshin Lake and Lady's Island Lake),
- Two places with SAC designation only (Hook Head and Carnsore Point),
- One place with SPA designation only (Keeragh Islands), and
- One proposed SPA (Seas off Wexford).