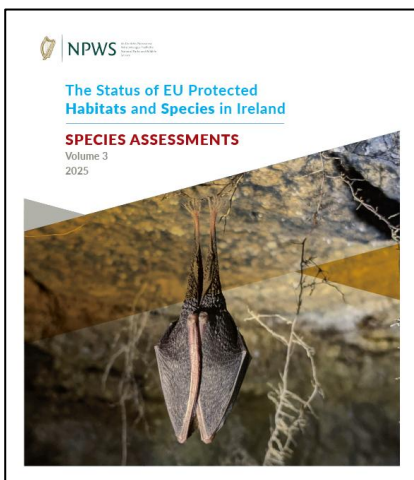


EU Habitats Directive: Species



Juvenile Grey Seal, Saltee Island Little.

EU Habitats Directive. The European Union (EU) Habitats Directive was adopted by the European Commission in 1992, came into force in 1994, and was transposed into Irish legislation in 1997. The main aim of both the Habitats Directive and the resulting Irish legislation is to contribute towards the conservation of biodiversity. The most recent consolidated version of the Directive reflects all amendments up to 14 July 2025 and is available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A31992L0043>.



Reporting. Article 17 of the Directive requires each Member State to report to the European Commission every six years on the status of habitats and species annexed in the Directive that occur in its administrative area. The reports are known as 'Article 17 reports'. Ireland submitted Article 17 reports in 2007, 2013, and 2019. In December 2025, Ireland published its fourth report comprising an assessment of the conservation status of both habitats and species in three volumes: Volume 1 gives an overview, while Volume 2 and Volume 3 give details regarding habitats and species respectively (available at <https://www.npws.ie/publications/article-17-reports/article-17-reports-2025>).

- Annexed species.** Annexes II, IV, and V of the Habitats Directive list species that require special conservation measures (NPWS, 2025a page 8).
- Annex II lists species whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).
 - Annex IV lists species in need of strict protection.
 - Annex V lists species whose taking in the wild and exploitation may be subject to management measures.

In total, the three annexes list 1,389 species that require conservation measures; of that total, 60 species occur in Ireland. In summary, these 60 species comprise

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| 11 | Plants: 2 hardened red seaweeds, 1 Reindeer lichen, 1 liverwort, 3 mosses, 1 fern, 1 clubmoss, and 2 flowering plants. | |
| 7 | Invertebrates: 5 molluscs (3 snails, 1 slug, and 1 freshwater mussel), 1 crawfish, and 1 butterfly. | |
| 7 | Fish | |
| 2 | Amphibians | |
| 1 | Reptile | |
| 9 | Bats | |
| 3 | Land mammals | |
| 2 | Seals | |
| 18 | Cetaceans | |
| 60 | Total | |

Of the 60 annexed species that occur in Ireland

- 24 are listed in Annex II (8 Annex II only + 10 both Annex II and Annex IV + 6 both Annex II and Annex V),
- 36 are listed in Annex IV (26 Annex IV only + 10 both Annex II and Annex IV), and
- 16 are listed in Annex V (10 Annex V only + 10 both Annex V and Annex II).

The full list of 60 species is set out below (Table 1) together with their relevant annexes.

There are also 9 annexed species that occur as vagrants in Ireland. These comprise 6 cetaceans [1348 Northern Right Whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*), 2028 False Killer Whale (*Pseudorca crassidens*), 2037 True's Beaked Whale (*Mesoplodon mirus*), 2622 Pygmy Sperm Whale (*Kogia breviceps*), 5029 Beluga/White Whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*), and 5034 Gervais' Beaked Whale (*Mesoplodon europaeus*)], 1 fish [1102 Allis Shad (*Alosa alosa*)], and 2 bats [1320 Brandt's Bat (*Myotis brandtii*) and 1304 Greater Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*)].



List of 60 annexed species recorded in Ireland.

Legend. **NA** = “not assessed”: neither the species’ current distribution nor its range was assessed.

CD = “Current distribution”: “the known or best estimate of distribution” in 10km or 50km squares of the national grid (NPWS, 2025a page 9). 28 species have a current distribution on the South Wexford Coast.

CR = “Current range”: “an envelope (drawn) around the (current) distribution using a standardised procedure”; the indicative geographical area within which the species is distributed (NPWS, 2025a page 9). The South Wexford Coast is in the current range of 20 species.

The three species that are qualifying interests of a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) on the South Wexford Coast are highlighted in red.

| EU species code, species English name (species scientific name), and page numbers (NPWS, 2025a and NPWS, 2025c). | Annex | | | CD | CR |
|--|-------|----|---|----|-----|
| | II | IV | V | | |
| 1376 Maërl (<i>Lithothamnion corallioides</i>) 46 and 136 | | | ■ | No | No |
| 1377 Maërl (<i>Phymatholithon calcareum</i>) 46 and 152 | | | ■ | No | No |
| 1378 <i>Cladonia</i> (<i>Cladina</i> morphotype) species 48 and NA | | | ■ | ? | ? |
| 1395 Petalwort (<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>) 46 and 120 | ■ | | | No | No |
| 1400 White Cushion Moss (<i>Leucobryum glaucum</i>) 47 and 164 | | | ■ | No | No |
| 1409 <i>Sphagnum</i> genus (<i>Sphagnum</i> spp.) 48 and NA | | | ■ | ? | ? |
| 6216 Shining Sickie Moss (<i>Hamatocaulis vernicosus</i>) 45 and 103 | ■ | | | No | No |
| 6985 Killarney Fern (<i>Vandenboschia speciosa</i>) 44 and 40 | ■ | ■ | | No | No |
| 1413 <i>Lycopodium</i> group (<i>Lycopodium</i> spp.) 48 and NA | | | ■ | ? | ? |
| 1528 Marsh Saxifrage (<i>Saxifraga hirculus</i>) 44 and 57 | ■ | ■ | | No | No |
| 1833 Slender Naiad (<i>Najas flexilis</i>) 45 and 86 | ■ | ■ | | No | No |
| 1013 Geyer’s Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>) 49 and 200 | ■ | | | No | No |
| 1014 Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo angustior</i>) 49 and 224 | ■ | | | No | No |
| 1016 Desmoulin’s Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>) 50 and 245 | ■ | | | No | No |
| 1024 Kerry Slug (<i>Geomalacus maculosus</i>) 50 and 261 | ■ | ■ | | No | No |
| 1029 Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>) 51 and 300 | ■ | ■ | | No | No |
| 1092 White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) 51 and 320 | ■ | ■ | | No | No |
| 1065 Marsh Fritillary (<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>) 52 and 338 | ■ | | | No | No |
| 1095 Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>) 52 and 367 | ■ | | | No | No |
| 1096 Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>) 53 and 391 | ■ | | | No | No |
| 1099 River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) 53 and 417 | ■ | | ■ | No | Yes |
| 5046 Killarney Shad (<i>Alosa killarnensis</i>) 54 and 440 | ■ | | ■ | No | No |
| 1103 Twaite Shad (<i>Alosa fallax</i>) 54 and 467 | ■ | | ■ | No | Yes |
| 5076 Pollan (<i>Coregonus pollan</i>) 55 and 487 | | | ■ | No | No |
| 1106 Atlantic Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) 55 and 509 | ■ | | ■ | No | Yes |

.../ continued

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|
| 6284 Natterjack Toad (<i>Epidalea calamita</i>) 56 and 526 | | ■ | | No | No |
| 1213 Common Frog (<i>Rana temporaria</i>) 56 and 540 | | | ■ | Yes | Yes |
| 1223 Leatherback Turtle (<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>) 57 and 555 | | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 1303 Lesser Horseshoe Bat (<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>) 57 and 575 | ■ | ■ | | No | No |
| 1309 Common Pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>) 58 and 587 | | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 5009 Soprano Pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>) 58 and 600 | | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 1317 Nathusius' Pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>) 59 and 614 | | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 1322 Natterer's Bat (<i>Myotis nattereri</i>) 59 and 629 | | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 1314 Daubenton's Bat (<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>) 60 and 642 | | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 1330 Whiskered Bat (<i>Myotis mystacinus</i>) 60 and 657 | | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 1326 Brown Long-eared Bat (<i>Plecotus auritus</i>) 61 and 670 | | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 1331 Leisler's Bat (<i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>) 61 and 683 | | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 1334 Mountain Hare (<i>Lepus timidus</i>) 62 and 700 | | | ■ | Yes | Yes |
| 1355 Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) 62 and 717 | ■ | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 1357 Pine Marten (<i>Martes martes</i>) 63 and 733 | | | ■ | Yes | Yes |
| 1364 Grey Seal (<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>) 63 and 752 | ■ | | ■ | Yes | Yes |
| 1365 Harbour Seal (<i>Phoca vitulina</i>) 64 and 772 | ■ | | ■ | Yes | Yes |
| 1345 Humpback Whale (<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>) 64 and 790 | | ■ | | No | Yes |
| 1349 Common Bottlenose Dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) 65 and 813 | ■ | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 1350 Short-beaked Common Dolphin (<i>Delphinus delphis</i>) 65 and 834 | | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 1351 Harbour Porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>) 66 and 857 | ■ | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 2027 Killer Whale (<i>Orcinus orca</i>) 66 and 875 | | ■ | | No | Yes |
| 2029 Long-finned Pilot Whale (<i>Globicephala melas</i>) 67 and 893 | | ■ | | No | Yes |
| 2030 Risso's Dolphin (<i>Grampus griseus</i>) 67 and 912 | | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 2031 White-sided Dolphin (<i>Lagenorhynchus acutus</i>) 68 and 929 | | ■ | | No | Yes |
| 2032 White-beaked Dolphin (<i>Lagenorhynchus albirostris</i>) 68 and 949 | | ■ | | No | Yes |
| 2034 Striped Dolphin (<i>Stenella coeruleoalba</i>) 69 and 964 | | ■ | | No | Yes |
| 2035 Cuvier's Beaked Whale (<i>Ziphius cavirostris</i>) 69 and 982 | | ■ | | No | No |
| 2038 Sowerby's Beaked Whale (<i>Mesoplodon bidens</i>) 70 and 1000 | | ■ | | No | No |
| 2618 Minke Whale (<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>) 70 and 1019 | | ■ | | Yes | Yes |
| 2621 Fin Whale (<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>) 71 and 1037 | | ■ | | No | Yes |
| 5020 Blue Whale (<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>) 71 and 1053 | | ■ | | No | No |
| 2624 Sperm Whale (<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>) 72 and 1071 | | ■ | | No | No |
| 5033 Northern Bottlenose Whale (<i>Hyperoodon ampullatus</i>) 72 and 1090 | | ■ | | No | Yes |
| 2619 Sei Whale (<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>) 73 and 1107 | | ■ | | No | No |

Table 1. The 60 species annexed in the Habitats Directive that occur in Ireland.

(Source: NPWS, 2025a and 2025c)

Summary: Annexed species on the South Wexford Coast

| Category | Number | Species |
|---|--------|---|
| Qualifying interests of SACs | 3 | Grey Seal (Saltee Islands) Common Bottlenose Dolphin (Hook Head) Harbour Porpoise (Hook Head & Carnsore Point) |
| Annex II: Current distribution | 2 | Otter Harbour Seal |
| Annex II: Current range | 3 | River Lamprey Twaite Shad Atlantic Salmon |
| Annex IV: Current distribution | 12 | Leatherback Turtle Common Pipistrelle Soprano Pipistrelle Nathusius' Pipistrelle Natterer's Bat Daubenton's Bat Whiskered Bat Brown Long-eared Bat Leisler's Bat Short-beaked Common Dolphin Risso's Dolphin Minke Whale |
| Annex IV: Current range | 8 | Humpback Whale Killer Whale Long-finned Pilot Whale White-sided Dolphin White-beaked Dolphin Striped Dolphin Fin Whale Bottlenose Whale |
| Annex V: Current distribution and Current range | 3 | Common Frog Mountain Hare Pine Marten |
| Annex V: unknown | 3 | <i>Cladonia</i> species <i>Sphagnum</i> genus <i>Lycopodium</i> group |

Table 2. Species annexed in the Habitats Directive that occur on the South Wexford Coast.

(Source: Table 1)

Note: Species are listed once in the highest category only and are not repeated in other categories.

SAC Qualifying Species

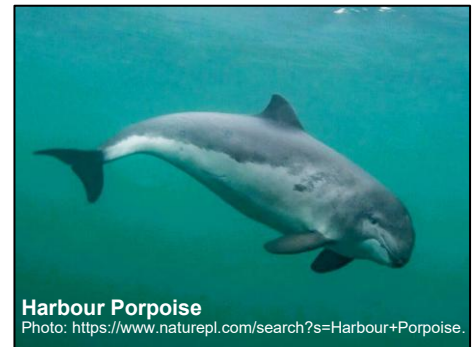
Three species of marine mammal are qualifying interests of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) on the South Wexford Coast: the Harbour Porpoise, Common Bottlenose Dolphin, and Grey Seal.

Harbour Porpoise. When it surfaces to breathe, the Harbour Porpoise seldom exposes much of its body. It is more likely to be seen inshore during the summer months, especially during July and August, and when the surface of the sea is calm. It is a qualifying interest of both the Hook Head SAC and the Carnsore Point SAC and is a protected species under the Wildlife Acts. For a profile of the species go to https://iwdg.ie/cms_files/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Harbour-porpoise-profile.pdf.

Common Bottlenose Dolphin. The Common Bottlenose Dolphin is not seen as often as the Harbour Porpoise, but it is believed that there is a resident population of these large dolphins in Irish coastal waters and that animals regularly visit the South Wexford Coast. The species is a qualifying interest of the Hook Head SAC and is a protected species under the Wildlife Acts. For a profile of the species go to https://iwdg.ie/cms_files/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Bottlenose-dolphin-profile.pdf.

Grey Seal. Grey Seals may be seen at the Saltee Islands throughout the year. They breed on both islands between August and December. The species is a qualifying interest of the Saltee Islands SAC and is a protected species under the Wildlife Acts. For further information about seals on the Saltee Islands see

https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/000707_Saltee%20Islands%20SAC%20Marine%20Supporting_Doc_V1.pdf.



Harbour Porpoise
Photo: <https://www.naturepl.com/search?s=Harbour+Porpoise>.



Common Bottlenose Dolphin
Photo: Irish Whale and Dolphin Group.



Common Bottlenose Dolphins
Pod passing Hook Head close inshore. Photo: Lim Ryan.



Juvenile Grey Seal on Saltee Island Little.
Photo: Jim Hurley.



Two **Common Bottlenose Dolphins** seen off Fethard Dock (left) and later off Ingard Point (centre). The image on the right shows the species' single blowhole, and short, well-defined, stubby, bottle-shaped beak with a distinct crease between the beak and the melon (enlarged 'forehead'). Photos: Jan Jenkins.

Core legislation

The most important pieces of core legislation, arranged by date, underpinning the protection of species in Ireland may be accessed via the following links (Table 3). Primary legislation is supplemented by a large number of Regulations, Orders, and other Statutory Instruments (SIs).

| Year | Legislation |
|------|---|
| 1976 | Wildlife Act, 1976 (Number 39 of 1976) |
| 2000 | Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000 (Number 38 of 2000) |
| 2010 | Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2010 (Number 19 of 2010) |
| 2011 | European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (Number 477 of 2011) |
| 2012 | Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2012 (Number 29 of 2012) |
| 2013 | European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. (Number 499 of 2013) |
| 2015 | European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations 2015. (Number 355 of 2015) |
| 2018 | Part 3 of the Heritage Act 2018 (Number 15 of 2018) |
| 2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part 2, Chapters 3 and 4 of the Planning, Heritage and Broadcasting (Amendment) Act 2021 (Number 11 of 2021) European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (Number 293 of 2021) http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/act/11/enacted/en/html |
| 2023 | Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023 (Number 25 of 2023) |
| 2024 | Fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan |

Table 3. The most important pieces of wildlife legislation and policy arranged by year.

For a list of currently available unofficial consolidations of the above legislation click on [Consolidated Legislation](#). Click on the following links to see the full list of Statutory Instruments made under two Acts, listed by section of each Act: [Statutory Instruments made under the Wildlife Act 1976](#) and [Statutory Instruments made under the Wildlife \(Amendment\) Act 2000](#).

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Activities Requiring Consent (ARCs)

ARCs are 38 activities with a potential to damage habitats and the species they support that may require the consent of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage before they may be conducted. It is an offence to carry out an ARC without prior consent. ARCs relevant to each individual Special Area of Conservation (SAC) are listed in the statutory instrument enabling the particular SAC.

(Source: <https://www.npws.ie/farmers-and-landowners/activities-requiring-consent>)