SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: AGHALASTY FEN

SITE CODE: 000672

This small fen, situated in Co. Westmeath, may be based on a glacial kettle-hole. At any rate, it has no inflow or outflow and seems to have persisted since late glacial times. A core shows the typical succession from lake mud to fen peat to acid peat (raised bog type). It now appears at a transitional stage between fen and bog: the marginal vegetation is of Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), rushes (*Juncus* spp.) with typical fen plants as well as the rare White Sedge (*Carex curta*) while the centre is formed of a *Sphagnum* sheet, interlaced with abundant Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) roots and tussocks. The area has two unusual bryophytes, namely *Sphagnum capillaceum* and *Acrocladium stramineum*.

Coring has also indicated an unusual ecological situation - the preexisting raised bog has been flooded and the present surface is in fact a mat of vegetation floating on 18" of water.

This remarkably intact fen system of a relatively rare type contains communities which are also rare.

11.11.2009