SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: SCARAGH WOOD

SITE CODE: 000971

Scaragh Wood Natural Heritage Area (NHA) is made up of six blocks of oak (*Quercus* spp.) woodland that remain within Cahir plantation which is located some 3km west of Cahir, in Co. Tipperary. The boundaries of these blocks correspond with Coillte sub-compartment boundaries.

In the main, these are small fragments of the preexisting oak woodland that have escaped the clear felling and planting which was the fate of the remainder. Small blocks of Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*) and larch (*Larix* spp.) are included within the NHA boundaries, but the majority of the NHA is oak. Below the oak canopy, Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) still survive in the shrub layer, while in places there is an infestation of Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*).

The ground flora is typical of the acidic soils that have developed over the Old red sandstone here, with Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and Great Wood-rush (Luzula sylvatica) prominent, also Small Cow-wheat (Melampyrum sylvaticum) and Bitter-vetch (*Lathyrus montanus*).

Mature native oak woodlands are rare in Ireland, many having suffered coniferisation by under planting or clear felling. Despite most of this woodland having been destroyed, the remaining fragments are of great importance, and are relatively undisturbed (this largely because of their position within the conifer forest). They therefore have a good age structure, with plenty of regeneration in areas away from the Rhododendron stands.

Several sub-compartments within the NHA boundaries that were under conifers have been clear felled and should be allowed to regenerate as oak woodland. There is a sub-compartment of scrub oak where this process is already under way.

13.11.2009