SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BRUSE HILL

SITE CODE: 000002

Situated about 4km north-east of Lough Gowna in Co. Cavan, Bruse Hill is an area of folded Palaeozoic rocks lying in a north-east – south-west direction, as do many of the ridges in this part of the county. Marshes and flushes alternate with drier peaty patches on which poor heathy grasslands prevail. Rock outcrops are scattered over the area, and become more common near the summit.

The grassland plants include Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Sheep's-fescue (*Festuca ovina*), Mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*) and Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*), while Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Green-ribbed Sedge (*Carex binervis*) occur higher up the slope. Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) are found throughout, with Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) on the lower slopes. Herbs such as Lady's-mantle (*Alchemilla* spp.) and Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) occur widely.

The flushes include a varied marsh flora in which sedges are the most frequent plants (*Carex demissa, C. dioica, C. echinata, C. nigra, C. panicea* and *C. pulicaris*). The two Butterworts (*Pinguicula vulgaris* and *P. lusitanica*) also occur with the large and noticeable Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*). A species of interest is the Many-stalked Spike-rush (*Eleocharis multicaulis*), which finds few suitable habitats in this region.

Rocky sites, sometimes home to lizards, rabbits and foxes, allow the growth of ferns such as *Blechnum spicant, Athyrium filix-femina, Thelypteris limbosperma* and *T. phegopteris*, while Tonbridge Filmy-fern (*Hymenophyllum tunbrigense*) and the rare and protected Red Data Book species, Parsley Fern (*Cryptogramma crispa*), have also been recorded.

The disused quarry and its ponds add diversity to the site. The eastern slope of the hill is almost completely dominated by Heather, but willow (*Salix* spp.) occur quite low down, with Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*) and Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*). A rare, Red Data Book species of orchid, the Small-white Orchid (*Pseudorchis albida*), has been recorded in the area.

The bird life is typical of hilly-land, and includes Wheatear, Stonechat, Skylark, Whitethroat, Linnet and Cuckoo but an absence of nesting sites limits the number of breeding species. Fieldfares and Redwings visit the area in early autumn before the cold weather sets in. No particular interest has been noted in the insect population although the variety of Lepidoptera species is quite good.

The chief value of this area lies in its varied habitats which differ significantly from the surrounding country. Floral diversity is relatively high and includes some rare and scarce species.

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