SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: SHEEMORE WOOD

SITE CODE: 001421

Sheemore Wood is dry, semi-natural deciduous woodland which has developed on the eastern slopes of a prominent limestone hill, approximately 8 km southeast of Drumshambo in Co. Leitrim.

This woodland is composed mainly of Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) with Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and a variety of other native species including oak (*Quercus* spp.). Introduced species such as Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) are present but not common. There are also areas formed almost exclusively of Hazel coppice with scattered Ash. Natural regeneration of Ash, Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) has been very successful in the steeper sections of the cliffs where sheep can not easily gain access.

The ground and shrub layers contain an excellent diversity of species including Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), Wild Plum (*Prunus domestica*), Early Dog-violet (*Viola reichenbachiana*), Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), Early-purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), and Barren Strawberry (*Potentilla sterilis*). Two species of interest also occur here which are generally not common in the region, namely Red Campion (*Silene dioica*) and Columbine (*Aquilegia vulgaris*). Red Campion is locally frequent but mainly found in the north and east and is rare elsewhere, and Columbine is occasional here but mainly found in the centre and according to Webb (1977) is rare. There are also rich bryophyte and lichen communities.

The wood itself is very natural and harbours a very large number of wildlife species. In addition to the woodland, areas of wet grassland, dry calcareous grassland, a small lake, limestone rock outcrops and vertical limestone cliffs are also included in this site. Parts of the site are seriously affected by overgrazing, particularly the summit and grassy slopes on the top of the hill. The variety of habitats in this small area supports a very rich fauna including a very large badger set, a fox den and bat caves.

Sheemore Wood appears to be unique in this region as there is no other intact woodland of any great extent occurring on limestone hills. It forms a prominent feature in the landscape, has outstanding scenic value, would be an excellent educational resource and is probably also of archaeological/historical significance because of the cairns on the summit.

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