SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: WOODFIELD BOG

SITE CODE: 000586

Woodfield Bog is located approximately 3km north of Clara town in Co. Offaly. It is a medium-sized raised bog which was formerly approx. 250ha in extent, but has been reduced to approx. 135ha due to turf-cutting and land reclamation. It lies in a geographical area which contains two highly-rated raised bog nature reserves – Clara Bog and Raheenmore Bog.

The intact, or uncut, portion of Woodfield Bog is the core area of interest in this site. It has an undulating micro-topography and vegetation which is typical of Midland Raised Bogs. Over much of the bog, the cover of *Sphagnum* mosses is quite continuous, with some species (*S. capillifolium, S. imbricatum* and *S. auriculatum*) colonising the intervening wet channels. Higher plant vegetation of hummocks is typically dominated by Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) and Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*). In the wet channels, White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) and Common Cottongross (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) are common. Pale Butterwort (*Pinguicula lusitanica*), which is not commonly found in the Midlands and east of the country, occurs here. It is restricted in its Irish distribution. The introduced species, Pitcherplant (*Sarracenia purpurea*), was planted on Woodfield Bog in the 1930s and has thrived to form a dense colony on the western side of the bog. To the east, are some very wet areas where water flows in natural channels off the bog, through areas with luxuriant *Sphagnum* growth (particularly *S. magellanicum*). Some channels are well-defined and support poor fen vegetation, including Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*).

Cutaway bog, reclaimed pasture and a commercial forestry plantation are included in the site. Although these habitats are of little intrinsic scientific interest, they are important in forming a hydrological buffer zone around the intact bog.

The rare Marsh Clubmoss (*Lycopodiella inundata*) has been recorded on Woodfield Bog as recently as 1988. This species, which occurs on lake margins and wet bogs has been recorded at only 9 localities since 1970 and is listed in the Irish Red Data Book. Woodfield Bog is also the site of a rare Myxomycete fungus, *Badhamia lilacina*.

Turf-cutting is very active on Woodfield Bog. Damage is concentrated mostly on the south-eastern and north-western parts of the bog, where drainage and removal of peat has been extended onto the intact bog from the cutaway margin. A recent development has been the dipping of drains across the eastern part of the bog (Kilmalady Townland). This poses a direct threat to the integrity of the bog.

In 1821, a bog burst occurred at Woodfield. This event is well-documented and is apparently a unique event for raised bogs. This lends an additional historical/educational aspect to the importance of this site.

Woodfield Bog is important as a good example of Midland Raised Bog. This habitat type is increasingly rare in Ireland and Europe. Furthermore, Woodfield Bog is the only midland station for the threatened Marsh Clubmoss.

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