



**Site Name: Gannivegil Bog SAC**

**Site Code: 000142**

The site is located 6 km south-east of Dunglow, adjacent to the village of Doocharry in west Donegal. The site is underlain by igneous granite which is out-cropping in many areas. The topography of the site as a whole is undulating, with three prominent hills rising in the centre, south and east of the site. The steepest and highest of these hills is Croaghleconnel which rises to an altitude of 226 m. There are numerous lakes of varying sizes throughout the site, many of which are hydrologically linked. The site comprises two former pNHAs (Gannivegil Bog and Galwolie Bog), now amalgamated into one site.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (\* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[3110] Oligotrophic Waters containing very few minerals

[4010] Wet Heath

[7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)\*

The predominant habitat within the site is lowland blanket bog. The blanket bog is dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*). Other species present include Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Deer-grass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and many species of bog moss, including *Sphagnum papillosum*, *S. capillifolium* and *S. compactum*.

A feature of the low-lying blanket bog within the site is the interconnecting pool complexes, streams and oligotrophic lakes. Typically the pool systems support hummocks of *S. capillifolium*, *S. subnitens*, *S. auriculatum* and *S. fuscum*. Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) is common in the pools, with Bog Asphodel, Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) and Great Sundew (*D. anglica*) colonising the edges. The fringes of some of the more sheltered lakes are colonised by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) and White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*). The rocky shores often support Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*), Water Lobelia (*Lobelia dortmanna*) and Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*). A few swallow holes occur which typically support Heather, Cross-leaved Heath, Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*) and Narrow Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris carthusiana*). Small flush systems are also found in association with the blanket bog. These often support Common Reed, Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Heather, Bogbean, Common Sedge and Many-stalked Spike-rush (*Eleocharis multicaulis*).

On higher ground wet heath forms a mosaic with blanket bog, which grades into dry heath on the steeper slopes and hill summits. Almost a quarter of this site has been categorised as wet heath, much of it considered to be good quality, supporting typical plant species and vegetation communities. Some areas have been subject to over-grazing or burning, however, with consequent erosion of the peat substrate.

A number of oligotrophic lakes occur throughout the site, the largest of which is Gannivegil Lough. Lowland oligotrophic lakes within this site typically have shallow margins with a mixed, rocky/peaty bottom in which the lake-margin flora has developed. Typical species colonising the margins of these lakes include Water Lobelia, Many-stalked Spike-rush, Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*), Pipewort (*Eriocaulon aquaticum*) and Shoreweed. In sheltered areas stands of Common Reed and Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) have developed.

In some of the narrow valleys, steep slopes have been colonised by Oak (*Quercus* spp.), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Ivy (*Hedera helix*).

A number of plant species with a limited distribution in Donegal are found within the site, namely: *Sphagnum fuscum*, Long-stalked Yellow Sedge (*Carex lepidocarpa*), Great Fen-sedge and Pipewort.

To the north and south of Lough Gannivegil are winter feeding sites for Greenland White-fronted Goose (usually 10-20 individuals). Golden Plover have been recorded from the site and are thought to breed in this area. The site also provides habitat for Merlin, although it is not known whether this species is resident on the site. All of the aforementioned species are listed in Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive and are Red Data Book species. Red Grouse also occur within the site.

The number of lakes, pools and water courses within the site provide excellent habitat for Otter. The Otter is listed under Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Other mammals recorded within the site are Badger and Irish Hare, both listed in the Red Data Book and legally protected under the Wildlife Act, 1976.

The main land uses within the site are grazing, turbary and quarrying. In the south of the site over-grazing is causing damage to the vegetation and has led to the erosion of peat in the most severely affected areas. Turbary is most extensive in the north of the site. Both hand cutting and Difco cutting are practised. There are a large number of drains associated with the turbary activity. Elsewhere, on higher ground, lands have also been drained, presumably with the intention of cutting. Three large quarries are found within the site. Granite has been quarried from these areas, two of which are still active. There is a large amount of dumping associated with the disused quarry. Dumping is not limited to these areas but is common along the sides of tracks leading into cut-over areas. Abandoned cars are common along these tracks. Localised burning has also been reported to occur on the site.

The main threats to the site include over-grazing, burning, further turbary activity and drainage.

Overall the site is of good quality, with large areas of intact blanket bog (priority Annex I habitat) and the Annex I habitats wet heath and oligotrophic lakes. The occurrence of flushes, swallow holes, valleys and a network of lakes and streams adds further interest to the site. The presence of Greenland White-fronted Goose, Golden Plover, Red Grouse and important mammals, together with the species of plants which are considered to be rare within the Donegal region, increase the conservation value of this area.