

**Site Name: Lough Nillan Bog (Carrickatlieve) SAC**

**Site Code: 000165**

Lough Nillan Bog covers a large area and includes the range of hills immediately south of Glenties in Co. Donegal. The site extends from Owenea Lough in the west to the summit of Silver Hill in the east. Most of the area is underlain by dark, metamorphic siltstones but a few igneous intrusions also occur. Blanket bog is the most extensive habitat type.

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 [7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)*
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The blanket bog at the site displays a range of forms reflecting variations in topography. In lower-lying parts, such as on saddles or at the base of hill slopes, pool systems frequently develop. These pools are usually the most valuable and diverse parts of the site in terms of plant-species, composition and ecology. Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*) and Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) are all found. Bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) are common, often forming pronounced hummocks.

Slightly drier, and often more level or only gently sloping parts of the bog support a vegetation dominated by Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*) are frequent. The bog mosses, *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. subnitens* are common.

On some of the slopes, flushes add diversity and support sedges (*Carex* spp.) and Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*). In places, bog mosses form quaking lawns.

Higher slopes support a drier, heathland vegetation of Heather, Purple Moor-grass and Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*). Upland grassland also occurs in some of these places, such as on the summit of Silver Hill, where Mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*) and Heath Rush occur along with the moss *Campylopus atrovirens*.

The site supports numerous small- to medium-sized lakes, the largest of which is Lough Anna (125 ha). Species such as Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*), Water Lobelia (*Lobelia dortmanna*), Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*), Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton*

*polygonifolius*), White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*) and Bladderworts (*Utricularia* spp.) are found in these lakes, indicating low trophic status.

The uncommon orchid, Lesser Twayblade (*Listera cordata*) has been recorded at the site, while Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) and Dioecious Sedge (*Carex dioica*), both uncommon in Donegal, have been recently recorded at the site also.

The nationally rare and recently recorded moss, *Sphagnum teres*, occurs on the site.

This site is of great value for birds; 13-15 pairs of Golden Plover nested around Lough Nillan in 1993 and at least three pairs of Merlin hunt over Lough Nillan and Tullynadobbin. These birds are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, and are classified as vulnerable in the Irish Red Data Book. During winter, Greenland White-fronted Goose feed on many areas of the site. In 1990, 72 individuals were recorded. This is the only flock of Greenland White-fronted Goose in the region which still feed significantly on traditional bog sites.

Two mammals listed in the Irish Red Data Book, Badger and Irish Hare, have been recorded.

Parts of the site are being eroded through over-grazing and turf-cutting, and forestry is an ever present threat. Large areas of formerly extensive, intact bog have been afforested adjacent to the site, resulting in habitat fragmentation. Despite this, the size of the remaining blanket bog, and the fact that it is predominantly intact and undisturbed, gives the area national conservation importance. The presence of rare breeding and migratory birds adds to the value of the site.