

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LOUGH NAMUCKA BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 000220

Lough Namucka Bog NHA is situated about 6 km south-east of Ballinlough, mainly in the townlands of Foxborough and Kilbeg, in Counties Galway and Roscommon. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog, and a small lake. It is bordered along most of its western side by the Island River.

Lough Namucka Bog consists of three lobes, the western-most of which is completely separated from the others by areas of cutover peat. There are wet areas with well-developed hummock/hollow systems and pools. A lake, Lough Namucka, adjoins the southern-most lobe of the bog, forming a semi-natural margin and possible lag zone. A number of interesting features occur on the bog, including several flushes, a dry ridge and swallow holes. The cutover areas surrounding the bog have either been abandoned or have been reclaimed for agriculture, and there is one small area of coniferous forestry at the south of the site.

The high bog at Lough Namucka supports many of the species typical of a Western Raised Bog, such as Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), many bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) and the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea*. In the centre of the bog there is a very wet and quaking region which consists of inter-connecting pools and island hummocks. The pools are filled with the bog moss *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), with the bog moss *S. magellanicum* and White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) at the margins. Between the pools there are quaking lawns of Bog Asphodel, White Beak-sedge and the moss *Campylopus atrovirens*. In the southern-most lobe another pool system occurs. The pools are again filled with the bog moss *S. cuspidatum* and Bogbean. The large dry hummocks are topped by Ling Heather, lichens (*Cladonia* spp.) and the moss *Pleurozium schreberi*. Bog Asphodel occurs in the wet hollows.

A number of flushes are found on the high bog, some of which occur in association with the lake. The lake supports Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*), White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*) and Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*). Just north of the lake an extensive flush occurs which is dominated by Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Common Reed, Common Cottongrass and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). Another flush occurs to the east of this, with open water and lawns of the bog moss *S. cuspidatum* and Bog Asphodel, along with tufts of Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*). There are also a number of swallow holes with Ling Heather and Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*). A small dry ridge occurs at the eastern side of the high bog and is covered in Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), Ling Heather and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*).

Current landuse on the site consists of peat-cutting around most of the margins of the high bog, and drainage associated with this. Large portions of the bog have been burnt in the past. Significant areas of cutover bog have been drained, cleared and reclaimed for agricultural purposes, and one small area at the south of the site has been planted with coniferous forestry. These activities have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Lough Namucka Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance, comprising as it does, a raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. The diversity added by the presence of the lake, ridge, flushes, swallow holes and possible lagg zone increase its conservation importance. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of raised bog (over 50%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.