

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: MOORFIELD BOG/FARM COTTAGE NHA

SITE CODE: 000221

Moorfield Bog/Farm Cottage NHA is situated approximately 5 km north-east of Ballymee, Co. Roscommon in the townlands of Moorfield in Co. Galway and Creggameen in Co. Roscommon. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog.

The site consists of a Western Raised Bog, which has developed between a ridge and a small river. The bog has good hummock/hollow microtopography, pools, quaking areas, swallow holes and a small flush. The cutover supports humid grassland, a small area of Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) scrub, and forestry.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a Western Raised Bog. Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and a range of bog mosses including *Sphagnum imbricatum*, *S. fuscum* and *S. cuspidatum*. Western Raised Bog indicator species present include the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea*, the mosses *Campylopus atrovirens* and *Racomitrium lanuginosum* and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*). Some Midland Raised Bog indicator species are also found on the bog, including Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) and the bog moss *Sphagnum magellanicum*.

The northern half of the bog is wet and spongy with many pools and quaking areas. The pools are filled with the aquatic bog moss *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). There are swallow holes just north of the county boundary and tear pools are situated alongside the cutover which extends into the middle of the bog. The bog has good hummock/hollow complexes with well-developed hummocks which support *Sphagnum imbricatum* and *Sphagnum fuscum*. The tops of the hummocks support Ling Heather and lichens. The hollows are filled with bog mosses including *Sphagnum magellanicum* and *S. papillosum*, Bog Asphodel and White Beak-sedge. A small flush dominated by Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) is found in the middle of the bog near the strip of cutover.

The vegetation of the cutover is dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molina caerulea*), with Soft Rush, Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Bent Grass (*Agrostis canina*) and Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*) also present. The cutover also supports small patches of Downy Birch scrub and forestry. Small patches of mineral soil with wet grassland occur to the west and south of the site.

Active peat-cutting occurs on sections of the north, east, west and south of the high bog margin, and the bog has been almost bisected by peat-cutting activities. Afforestation on the cutover is located to the west of the site and in a small area of the central cutover. Areas of cutover have been reclaimed for agricultural purposes around the site; the grassland here is used for grazing livestock. Damaging activities associated with these landuses include drainage and burning of the high bog. These

are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Moorfield Bog/Farm Cottage 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 site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including pools, quaking areas, hummock/hollow complexes, swallow holes and a small flush, as well as a number of scarce plant species. 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.