

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: CLOONOLISH BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 000249

Cloonoolish Bog NHA is situated about 4 km north-east of Killimor, mainly in the townlands of Cloonoolish and Lissaniska North in south-east Co. Galway. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog.

Cloonoolish Bog is a small example of a raised bog, but it has a high dome and good bog moss (*Sphagnum* spp.) cover. It is bordered closely on its north-western side by a mineral ridge, and by low-lying agricultural ground on the other sides. The side of the bog bounding the mineral ridge does not appear to have been cut in the past and so may form a semi-natural margin. Overall, the bog surface is quite dry due to drainage and peat-cutting at the margins. There are, however, wet areas with some poorly developed hummock/hollow systems, occasional small pools and one small quaking area. There are three small ridges with unusual vegetation found at the north-east of the site. The cutover areas have mostly been abandoned, but some have been reclaimed for agriculture.

The high bog at Cloonoolish possesses many of the species typical of raised bogs in Ireland. Most of the bog surface is uniformly medium wet with a high cover of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and bog mosses, with species such as *Sphagnum imbricatum*, *S. magellanicum*, *S. papillosum* and *S. cuspidatum*. The eastern half has not been burnt for many years and bushy Ling Heather and lichen (*Cladonia* spp.) growth predominate. The western half has been recently burnt, and Ling Heather and Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) are vigorously regrowing. The bog moss cover appears to be equally actively regenerating. The small wettest area, north of the centre, appears to be drying out, with deep hollows and no standing water between the hummocks. Three interesting ridges occur, supporting Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), large tufts of Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), bog mosses and many young Scot's Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) trees. An interesting, but very small, feature is a flush consisting of a hollow filled with Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) and the bog moss *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, adjacent to a very large relic hummock with Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*). This is surrounded by an unusual occurrence of a number of orchid species (*Dactylorhiza* spp.) over a few square metres.

Current landuse on the site consists of peat-cutting around much of the eastern and southern edges of the high bog, and the drainage associated with this. Large portions of the bog have been severely burnt in the past. Significant areas of cutover bog have been drained, cleared and reclaimed for agricultural purposes. 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.

Cloonoolish 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. 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.