

Site Name: Derrycrag Wood Nature Reserve SAC

Site Code: 000261

Derrycrag Wood is an old oak woodland, situated 1.5 km south-east of Woodford, Co. Galway, and is traversed by the Woodford River. The underlying rock is Old Red Sandstone, which is overlain in places by drift. The soils vary from thin, acidic podzols to deeper, gleyed brown earths. The site is dominated by planted conifers, but fragments of old oak woodland still occur.

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):

[91A0] Old Oak Woodlands

Before commercial conifer planting in the 1930s and 1940s, this would have been part of the largest oak woodlands in the country. In the fragments remaining, the Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) canopy can be up to 17m tall. The woodland also contains Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Yew (*Taxus baccata*) are locally abundant. Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) occur on the slightly richer soil.

In spite of the fact that the site is dominated by planted conifers, elements of the original ground flora persist, especially where mature Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) is present. The ground flora consists mainly of Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*), Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*), Wood-sedge (*Carex sylvatica*) and Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), with an abundance and diversity of mosses in the more open areas. At one small location on the Woodford River bank there is a remarkably rich flora, including the Red Data Book species Alder Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*) and three plant species which are otherwise scarce in Ireland: Blue-eyed-grass (*Sisyrinchium bermudiana*), Lesser Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum minus*) and Columbine (*Aquilegia vulgaris*).

Most of the site is also designated as a Nature Reserve, but an adjacent area of thinned out Scots Pine with a very diverse ground flora and an area of wet grassland are also included.

Pine Marten and Badger (both Red Data Book species), Red Squirrel, Fox and Fallow Deer are all found in the wood. Bat species also forage in the area. Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Jay are a few of the more notable bird species present in the site.

Management of the wood includes the gradual removal of all conifers except for a few areas with mature Scots Pine. The cleared areas, however, are vulnerable to invasion by non-native species, e.g. Beech (*Fagus sylvaticus*) and to grazing by deer.

Derrycrag Wood is of considerable conservation significance as an old oak woodland, a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Furthermore it supports a diverse flora and fauna including the Red Data Book species Alder Buckthorn, Pine Marten and Badger.