

Site Name: Kilsallagh Bog SAC

Site Code: 000285

Kilsallagh Bog is a large raised bog, with a largely intact dome, situated about 7 km north of Glenamaddy in Co. Galway. It is set in a peat basin which is almost completely surrounded by mineral soil.

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):

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| [7110] Raised Bog (Active)* |
| [7120] Degraded Raised Bog |
| [7150] Rhynchosporion Vegetation |

Active raised bog comprises areas of high bog that are wet and actively peat-forming, where the percentage cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) is high, and where some or all of the following features occur: hummocks, pools, wet flats, *Sphagnum* lawns, flushes and soaks. Degraded raised bog corresponds to those areas of high bog whose hydrology has been adversely affected by peat cutting, drainage and other land use activities, but which are capable of regeneration. The Rhynchosporion habitat occurs in wet depressions, pool edges and erosion channels where the vegetation includes White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) and/or Brown Beak-sedge (*R. fusca*), and at least some of the following associated species, Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), sundews (*Drosera* spp.), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*).

The core of Kilsallagh Bog contains raised bog habitat of outstanding quality, with a vigorous hummock and pool system grading into an extensive area of bog moss lawns (notably *Sphagnum papillosum* and *S. magellanicum*), which are actively growing. This central part is extremely quaking. This grades down on the north-east slope into an unusual wet community which is flushed, and consists of a mixture of tall Carnation Sedge, Cottongrasses (*Eriophorum* spp), with frequent large tufts of Deergrass. This vegetation has a 100% understorey of bog mosses. Rarer *Sphagnum* species such as *S. fuscum* and *S. imbricatum* are known from the site.

The pool areas, which are loci for Rhynchosporion development, support typical species such as White Beak-sedge, Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), sundews and the bog moss *S. cuspidatum*.

Degraded raised bog is the dominant habitat on the uncut high bog surface at this site. In general the vegetation is dominated by Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Hare's-tail

Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Deergrass, Bog Asphodel and Carnation Sedge, and in many areas these species form species-poor vegetation types with one or two dominants. In parts of the high bog, Purple Moor Grass (*Molinia caerulea*) is prominent which indicates a degree of lateral water movement, i.e. drainage. A portion of the high bog on this site (c. 10 ha) is afforested with Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta*) which is 25 years old. Many of the trees are severely stunted due to the wet conditions and a relatively healthy, albeit somewhat modified, bog vegetation is present.

Most of the boundary, except in the far north, is on, or close to, the mineral soil, and so the site encloses most of the peat basin of Kilsallagh Bog. As well as forestry, peat cutting and drainage, damage to the high bog area has occurred from burning. However, the future prospects are good for this site as a large proportion is owned by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Restoration works could improve the quality of the degraded bog areas.

Red Grouse, a scarce and declining species in Ireland, and one which is a Red-list species, breeds on the bog.

Raised bogs are an extremely threatened type in Ireland and Europe. Kilsallagh Bog is of considerable conservation value as it contains examples of the Annex 1 habitats active raised bog (listed with priority status), degraded raised bog and depressions on peat substrates (Rhynchosporion). Furthermore, Kilsallagh Bog is one of a number of raised bogs in the Ballymoe/Glenamaddy region of east Galway, which, together, form the largest and most important cluster of relatively intact raised bog sites in the country.