



**Site Name: Loughatorick South Bog SAC**

**Site Code: 000308**

Loughatorick South Bog is located about 8 km north-west of Mountshannon, straddling the Clare/Galway border. It occupies the summit of Scalp Mountain, and extends down the gentle slopes to the south and to the east. Scalp is one of the southernmost, and lower, of the Slieve Aughty Mountains, reaching a height of 325 m. It is predominantly of Old Red Sandstone, with some Silurian beds to the east. At this elevation, the bog is an intermediate between lowland and mountain blanket bog, and can be described as a highland blanket bog.

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):

[7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)*
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The vegetation is dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), with a limited number of associates, chiefly Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Heath Milkwort (*Polygala serpyllifolia*), Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) and occasional Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). The bog mosses *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. subnitens* occur, with occasional *S. tenellum*, *S. cuspidatum*, and another moss *Leucobryum glaucum*.

Purple Moor-grass is particularly typical of the gently sloping areas. Flatter areas support a vegetation dominated by Heather, Deergrass and Bog Asphodel. The summit and knolls support a heathy vegetation with more Heather and other species such as Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) and Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*). A variety of other communities have been documented elsewhere and develop in different hydrological conditions caused by variations in water and mineral supply. One of the more interesting communities occurs over quaking groundwater seepage areas, with a mosaic of Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) with Purple Moor-grass or Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), a variety of sedges (*Carex nigra*, *C. lepidocarpa*, *C. limosa* and *C. echinata*), and two insectivorous species, Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*) and Intermediate Bladderwort (*Utricularia intermedia*).

The occurrence of Bog-rosemary is noteworthy, as this is one of its most western sites in the country. This is a species characteristic of raised bogs in the midlands, and its presence here reflects the intermediate character of the bog.

The bog supports a population of Red Grouse, and Snipe are regular in winter and may breed.

Intact, active blanket bogs, which were once characteristic of upland areas in Ireland, are now rare and vulnerable, and are recognised as habitats of international importance. Loughatorick South Bog is a good example of the habitat, and is of particular importance given that it is an intermediate between lowland and mountain bog. Much of the rest of the Slieve Aughty range is heavily afforested, but this bog is remarkably intact, making it all the more valuable.