

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: MEENEEN BOG NHA**

**SITE CODE: 000310**

Meeneen Bog NHA is situated mainly in the townlands of Meeneen, Tiranascragh and Tullinlicky, 6 km south-west of Eyrecourt, Co Galway. The site comprises a medium-sized raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The River Shannon runs to the south-east of the site.

This raised bog consists of a distinct dome of high bog divided into three sections by trackways. The fragmented nature of the high bog has led to the overall desiccation of this habitat, and a lowering of the water table. There is a large flush in the central lobe. To the north-west and south-east of the site several small areas of mixed deciduous woodland occur. The bog is surrounded by cutover on all its margins.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of the Midland Raised Bog type, consisting of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), cottongrass (*Eriophorum* spp.), and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*). Other common species on the high bog include Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and Deergrass (*Scirpus caespitosus*). Bog moss (*Sphagnum* spp.) growth is good. The overall topography is dominated by hummocks. Many pools contain algae and are showing signs of drying out. In the western lobe, good *Sphagnum papillosum* hummocks occur and some pools contain *S. cuspidatum* and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). The sundews *Drosera rotundifolia* and *D. intermedia* also occur. Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) has been recorded from a cutface along the north-eastern margins. An extensive flush dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) occurs to the east of the site. Other species associated with the flush include Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) and the Heath Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza maculata*).

There is extensive cutover to the north-west, south-west and south-east of the site. Downy Birch and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) have encroached onto the cutover in many areas. In the north-west two small areas of birch wood occur and a larger area is found on cutover in the south-west.

Irish Hare, a Red Data Book species has been recorded on the site.

Current landuse on the site consists of peat-cutting along the south-east, south-west and north-west margins of the site. A small area of afforestation is found on cutover to the east. Damaging activities associated with this landuse include drainage and burning. Fire damage has been recorded in the 1980s but there is little evidence of recent burning on 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.

Meeneen 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. This site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats including hummock/hollow complexes, some pools and a significant flush which add to the diversity and conservation value of the site. 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.