



Site Name: Shankill West Bog SAC

Site Code: 000326

Shankill West Bog is a small raised bog with unusual topography and a largely intact dome, situated about 7 km north-west of Mount Bellew Bridge, in Co. Galway. A large proportion of the central dome of this bog comprises good quality raised bog habitat, i.e. a wet area with a good pool-and-hummock system.

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):

[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 wettest areas of bog, which contain actively growing raised bog habitat, occur in the central and south-eastern portions of the high bog dome, and these areas are surrounded by areas of drier, degraded raised bog vegetation. The active bog is characterised by large, often interconnecting, pools with a rich and healthy community of bog mosses, separated by low rises with Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and abundant bog moss carpets. It is in the wettest areas of the bog that the Rhynchosporion vegetation is best developed. The quaking lawns are dominated by *Sphagnum cuspidatum* and support White Beaked-sedge, Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Bog Asphodel. Many of the bog pools are colonised by species such as *Sphagnum auriculatum*, sundews and Bog-sedge (*Carex limosa*). A small flushed area, with mineral enriched water, occurs within the pool/hummock system, indicated by the presence of the moss *Aulacomnium palustre*, amongst others. An old, largely infilled drain carries surplus water from this area.

The degraded bog habitat is typically dominated by vascular plant species typical of raised bog such as Carnation Sedge, Deergrass, Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Heather, Bog Asphodel and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*). In some of the wetter areas of degraded raised bogs there can be well-developed hummocks of rarer *Sphagnum* species such as *S. fuscum* and *S. imbricatum*. Along the margins of the high bog dome a few rather dry flushes dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) occur.

Although most the site margins are not subject to intensive peat-cutting at present, the edges of the high bog dome continue to experience slow drying-out due to past peat cutting. In the south-eastern corner of the site a network of drains has been inserted on the high bog recently and this has resulted in damage to the hydrology of this corner of the site.

Shankill West Bog is one of the best examples of a relatively small raised bog site in the country and contains good examples of the Annex 1 habitats active raised bog, degraded raised bog and depressions on peat substrates (Rhynchosporion). It is of particular interest because of the presence of unusual topographical features.