

Site Name: Tully Mountain SAC

Site Code: 000330

Tully Mountain is located on the northern side of Ballynakill Harbour, approximately 5 km north-west of Letterfrack, Co. Galway. The mountain is composed of Dalradian schists and gneisses and rises to an altitude of 355 m.

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):

[4030] Dry Heath [4060] Alpine and Subalpine Heaths

The principal heath type at Tully Mountain SAC is dry heath which occurs mostly in mosaic with bare vegetation, rocks and upland grassland. A form of dry heath dominated by low Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) is found on steep ground at the south-east of the site. Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) occurs sparsely throughout this area and the heath also supports a carpet of mosses. At the north and west of the site the heath is found in mosaic with abundant Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and isolated rocks.

Alpine heath, characterised by Juniper and Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), is extensive above the 300 m contour. It occurs in mosaic with rocks and, in places, vegetation associated with wetter conditions. Other species present include Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), St. Dabeoc's Heath (*Dabeocia cantabrica*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and Heather. Lichens (*Cladonia* spp.) and mosses also occur.

At the north of the site and below the mountain is wet grassland dominated by Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*). Interspersed throughout this are patches of bog, with species such as Bladderwort (*Utricularia* spp.) and bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). Above this is a small area of upland grassland dominated by Mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*).

Several wet flushes, with sedges (*Carex* spp.), bog mosses, Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*) and sundews (*Drosera* spp.), occur on the site. There are also a number of upland lakes, notably Loughaun Lake which is at an altitude of approximately 290 m and supports abundant aquatic vegetation including Floating Bur-reed (*Sparganium angustifolium*). Several streams flow off the mountain side, the banks of which support Soft Rush and liverworts. Low cliffs occur at the south-west of the site.

On the slopes below 200 m over-grazing by sheep has resulted in erosion of the heath vegetation; burning of the lower slopes adds further to degradation of the site. Other

activities which are impacting on the site include quarrying, peat cutting and water abstraction.

The main scientific interest of the site lies in the presence of alpine heath of the *Arctostaphylos-Juniperus* type, a habitat now rare in the west of Ireland. Despite some damage, this habitat is still generally of good quality. Both alpine and dry heath habitats are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.