



Site Name: Sheheree (Ardagh) Bog SAC

Site Code: 000382

Sheheree Bog lies 2 km south-east of Killarney in Co. Kerry, in a depression within a high ridge (103 m). It has developed by succession from a small lake to a ridge basin bog with similarities to a raised bog. The bog is rather unique in an Irish context as it is the only raised bog system to be completely surrounded by a wet lagg zone.

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

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 high bog surface at Sheheree contains areas of both active and degraded bog. In general, about 50% of the high bog surface is rather dry, being dominated by Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*). Other frequent vascular plant species include Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*). The cover of mosses and lichens is generally low, with species more characteristic of dry conditions such as *Sphagnum capillifolium*, *S. subnitens*, *Hypnum cupressiforme* and *Cladonia portentosa* most conspicuous. There are occasional wet hollows with bog mosses (*S. cuspidatum*, *S. auriculatum*) and species such as Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) but these are generally rare.

A concentration of Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) and Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) trees grow towards the north-east of the site, beneath which abundant bog mosses grow. The open bog adjacent to this is quite wet and Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) grows abundantly here, a relatively unusual feature. Surrounding the bog is a wet lagg area. Here more base-demanding species occur, such as Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*), Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Water Horsetail (*Equistum fluviatile*), Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*), Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) and Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*). To the north and

north-west, the lagg is vegetated by a wet woodland of Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Willow (*Salix* spp.), with some Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) in the drier outer margins. The site also includes dry grassland fields which slope down to, and adjoin, the bog.

The rare and legally protected (Flora (Protection) Order, 1999) Slender Cottongrass (*Eriophorum gracile*) occurs at this site.

The bog itself is not substantially used, owing to its wetness and the wetness of the surrounding lagg. The high bog is being invaded by Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and Scots Pine, which may indicate drying of the mire. The abundance of *Cladonia* lichen in places may be a result of burning in previous years. Adjoining fields are grazed by cattle and sheep and fertilised to varying degrees. Land use practices here would impact on the bog habitat.

Sheheree Bog is of high conservation importance as it contains good examples of active raised bog and degraded raised bog, habitats that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Of particular note is that it is the only remaining raised bog in the country with an intact surrounding lagg system, and this makes it of especially high ecological interest. In addition, the site is the most south-westerly example of a raised bog in the country and is one of only two examples of the habitat in Co. Kerry. The presence of the protected plant species Slender Cottongrass, which is only known from approximately 25 sites in Ireland, adds to the conservation value of the site. The small size of this bog, coupled with the fact that it is a Nature Reserve, are positive factors for the future conservation of the site.