SITE SYNOPSIS

Site Name: Flughany Bog SAC

Site Code: 000497

Flughany Bog is an example of a western raised bog, located 10 km south-east of Tobercurry. It is one of a series of small to medium-sized raised bogs which occur close to the north-westerly limit of raised bog formation along the border between counties Mayo and Sligo. Other bogs occurring in the area are Derrynabrock, Kilgarriff, Tawnabeg and Gowlaun Bogs. Flughany is comprised of two lobes which are separated by a ridge of mineral material. The bog displays some features of blanket bog morphology, such as the absence of a distinct dome.

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*).

Most of the wet, high quality active bog at this site occurs in the south-eastern portion of the uncut high bog area. Here there is a well-developed pool and hummock system. The numerous inter-connecting pool systems and wet flats support Rhynchosporion vegetation. Typically, the vegetation is dominated by *Sphagnum cuspidatum,* with White Beak-sedge, Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*), Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), bladderworts (*Utricularia* spp.) and *Sphagnum auriculatum* also present. Wet lawns dominated by White Beak-sedge also occur on flat ground between some of the pool complexes. Low hummocks of bog mosses, including scarce species such as *S. imbricatum* and *S. fuscum*, are a feature of the bog surface.

Degraded raised bog dominates most of the high bog surface. The driest and most disturbed marginal areas of the uncut high bog surface are typically dominated by more ecologically robust species such as Carnation Sedge, Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Deergrass and Bog Asphodel, which tend to form extensive mono-dominant swards. Further into the high bog, where the water levels are higher and more stable, the vegetation is less disturbed and more species-rich, and there is a high *Sphagnum* cover (typically 25 to 50%). Pool areas are rare in areas of degraded raised bog and where they occur they tend to be shallow and dominated by an algal mat with little *Sphagnum* cover.

The bog provides habitat for birds. Flughany Bog supported approximately 160 Snipe in winter 1988/89. Snipe and Curlew breed here in summer and Red Grouse, a Red-listed species, is resident.

Turf-cutting, particularly mechanised peat extraction, and drain excavation pose major threats to raised bogs, as they upset their sensitive hydrology. Grazing and fire can cause damage to the peat surface and vegetation. At Flughany, the structure of the bog is partially degraded mainly due to the effects of peat extraction along the margins of the high bog area. This peat cutting has lowered the water levels and has resulted in a species-poor flora, which has a low *Sphagnum* cover, over a substantial part of the surface.

Flughany Bog, whilst small, is a good example of a relatively intact raised bog, and contains examples of the Annex 1 habitats active raised bog, degraded raised bog and depressions on peat substrates (Rhynchosporion). The site is also of note as it occurs close to the north-westerly limit of raised bog formation in Ireland. Overall, the site displays a good diversity of the flora and fauna that is typical of raised bog habitats.