

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: TAWNYMACKAN BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 000548

Tawnymackan Bog NHA is a lowland blanket bog situated approximately 4 km south of Louisburgh in Co. Mayo, within the townlands of Formoyle and Tawnymackan. It is bounded on the east by the Creggaunbaun - Louisburgh road and on the south by enclosed agricultural land along a minor road. On the west the site is bounded by mineral outcrops, to the northwest by a small stream and by a forestry plantation on the north. Bedrock geology is acid quartzite. The site contains a series of low ridges and is drained by a small stream and ditches. Altitude range is 60 m to 120 m.

The site contains intact blanket bog with pool systems, small lakes, lawn vegetation dominated by White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*), flushed blanket bog, hummock-hollow complexes, quaking scraw vegetation as well as areas of drier bog vegetation dominated by Purple Moor-Grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*).

Much of the blanket bog vegetation consists of Black-bog Rush, Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Cross-leaved Heath and Purple-Moor Grass. The vegetation of the flush is characterised by Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*). The bog surface is quaking and there are active pool systems with Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). Species associated with the pools include the bog mosses (*Sphagnum auriculatum* and *S. cuspidatum*), Oblong-leaved Sundew (*Drosera intermedia*), White Beak-sedge and Bog Asphodel. In the centre of the site is a complex of aligned pools. Some pools have islands within them. The islands are colonised by Ling Heather with Bog Myrtle, Purple Moor-grass and Deergrass.

Bog pools are surrounded by lawn vegetation of White Beak-sedge and tussocks of Black Bog-rush with Cross-leaved Heath and Bog Asphodel. Also occurring here is the moss *Campylopus introflexus* and almost complete cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). The lichen *Cladonia uncialis* is also present in the lawn vegetation. There are hummocks of the bog moss *Sphagnum imbricatum* with Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Purple Moor-Grass and Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*). There are also hummocks of the mosses *Leucobryum glaucum*, *Racomitrium lanuginosum* and others of bog mosses *Sphagnum capillifolium* with *S. papillosum*, *S. magellanicum* and the lichen *Cladonia portentosa*.

There is a quaking area of bog with Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and a lake that is fringed by quaking bog moss (*Sphagnum* spp.) vegetation. Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), a species of note when occurring on blanket bog, is recorded at the lake edge among the bog moss *Sphagnum subnitens*, the moss *Hypnum jutlandicum*, Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Purple Moor-Grass, Ling Heather, Deergrass and Cross-leaved Heath.

Kestrel, a species that is protected by the Wildlife Act in Ireland, has been recorded on the site.

Current landuse on the site consists of grazing. Active peat cutting and plantation forestry are land uses occurring adjacent to the site.

Tawnymackan Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance consisting of lowland blanket bog. This site supports a good diversity of blanket bog microhabitats, including hummock/hollow complexes, aligned pools, lakes, streams, lawn vegetation dominated by White Beak-sedge, flushes and regenerating cutover. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource and is largely confined to coastal regions with cool, wet, oceanic climates at temperate latitudes. North-west Europe contains some of the best developed areas of blanket bog in the world. Lowland blanket bog comprises less than 3% of the world's peatlands. In Europe this type of blanket bog is restricted to Ireland, Britain, Norway and Iceland. The lowland blanket bog that occurs in Ireland is considered to be an extreme hyperoceanic variant of the habitat type, found nowhere else in the world except on the coastal fringes of north-west Scotland.