

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BLACK CASTLE BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 000570

Black Castle Bog NHA is situated approximately 8 km north-west of Edenderry, mainly in the townlands of Clonmore, Ballyheashill and Ballymacwilliam in County Meath. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The north-western margins of the site are bounded by roads and those on the south-east are bounded mainly by scrub and woodland.

The site consists of one crescent-shaped lobe, which is quite flat. There is an absence of permanent pools on the high bog. The raised bog is of particular interest as it is one of the most easterly remaining raised bogs in the country. The peripheral area of abandoned cutover bog has developed into a range of different habitats.

Much of the high bog vegetation is typical of the Midland Raised Bog type, consisting of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*). The bog moss (*Sphagnum* spp.) cover is quite high, especially in the central areas of the bog. Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) and Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) are also found on the bog, although not in abundance. A number of species of lichen (*Cladonia* spp.) are recorded from this site. There are a number of habitat types found on the cutover areas of the bog. These include areas of wet grassland dominated by Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), areas with dense Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) cover, Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) scrub, Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) woodland and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) dominated semi-natural woodland.

Irish Hare, a Red Data Book species, has been recorded at the site.

Current landuse on the site consists of peat-cutting around the edge of the high bog, and the drainage associated with this. Large portions of the bog have been burnt at regular intervals. These activities have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Black Castle Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance, comprising as it does, a raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. It is especially important because of its eastern location. This site also supports a wide range of habitats, especially associated with the cutover areas. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of raised bog (over 50%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.

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