

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BELLA BRIDGE BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 000591

Bella Bridge Bog NHA is located approximately 2.5 km north-east of Frenchpark, mainly in the townlands of Drishaghaun and Finisclin, Co. Roscommon. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The site is bounded in the west by the Breedoge River.

This site is the remnant of a larger bog that has now been cutover and reclaimed for agriculture. The site was formerly linked to Cornaveagh Bog NHA (603) but an area of cutover now separate the two. Two mineral ridges are found in the east and south of the site. There are areas of hummocks and a few pools, mostly in the south of the bog, but there is no longer a system of pools. A flush occurs in the north-west of the site. Cutover is found mostly in the northern half of the site.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a North-Western Raised Bog, consisting of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), cottongrass (*Eriophorum* sp.), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*) and the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum*. A disused track runs across the site and south of this the bog surface is wet and there is a deep carpet of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) present. Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and lichens (*Cladonia* spp.) are common in this area and Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) has also been recorded. The hummock-forming bog mosses *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. papillosum* have been recorded on the site, as have the relatively scarce *S. imbricatum* and *S. fuscum*. Although there is no longer a system of pools there are a few pools remaining in the south of the site which support the aquatic bog moss *S. cuspidatum*. There is a flush in the north-west of the bog with Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). Old cutover in the south and east of the site has been recolonised by Ling Heather, Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and cottongrass. Along the southern boundary of the site areas of cutover have been colonised by Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) and Purple Moor-grass.

Current landuses on the site include peat-cutting and agriculture. Mechanised peat-cutting is taking place mostly in the north-east and west of the site. Areas of cutover all around the bog have been reclaimed for agriculture but there are only a few fields of improved grassland within the site. Damaging activities associated with these landuses include drainage throughout the site and burning of the high bog. All these activities have resulted in the loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability. Dumping of domestic waste and old cars takes place along the tracks on this site.

Bella Bridge 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. The site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummocks, pools and a flush. The site is also at

the north-western extreme for raised bogs in Ireland. 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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