



Site Name: Lough Nabrickkeagh Bog SAC

Site Code: 000634

Lough Nabrickkeagh Bog is located in the Ox Mountains, approximately 0.5 km north-west of Lough Talt in Co. Sligo. The bog overlies a substratum of metamorphic schist and gneiss, and ranges in altitude from 150 m to 260 m O.D. Topographical relief is provided by low, flat ridges, which tend to be drier than the flats in between.

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):

[7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)*

The site comprises two areas of highland blanket bog which are separated by a conifer plantation, but which are otherwise largely intact. These areas support a good diversity of vegetation communities and micro-topographical features typical of blanket bog. The vegetation is typically dominated by Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), with a good cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) underneath. There is some variation in species abundance with altitude.

Extensive areas feature systems of shallow, inter-connecting pools colonised by White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and occasional Bog-sedge (*Carex limosa*), with Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) and Great Sundew (*D. anglica*) lining pool margins. Hummocks formed by bog mosses (including *S. imbricatum* and *S. fuscum*) are scattered throughout. These provide a slightly drier habitat for species such as Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), and often have good growth of lichens, including the uncommon species, *Cladonia rangiferina*. Elsewhere, pools are more defined and somewhat deeper. These are frequently colonised by Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and the bog moss *S. cuspidatum*. Other areas have wet and quaking *Sphagnum* lawns with abundant White Beak-sedge.

Several flushes occur on the site, mostly associated with streams, and some are iron-stained. The latter tend to be species-rich, with Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*). Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) occurs in some of the flushes (this species is more commonly found on the raised bogs in the midlands of Ireland), and Eared Willow (*Salix aurita*) is an occasional coloniser.

Lough Nabrickkeagh has a stony bottom and is colonised by aquatic species such as Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*) and Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*), with White and Yellow Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba* and *Nuphar lutea*). Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*) occurs as an emergent. The shoreline is colonised by species such as Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Heath Rush (*J. squarrosus*) and Common Yellow-sedge (*Carex demissa*).

Parts of the bog were cut for turf in the past and the abandoned cut-away areas are now regenerating with abundant bog mosses and some of the vascular plants typically found on the intact bog.

The bog provides valuable habitat for Red Grouse.

The major threats to blanket bogs stem from peat exploitation, drainage, afforestation, over-stocking with grazing animals and burning. Afforestation has already decreased the area of intact bog at this site, but those areas which do remain appear remarkably undamaged by grazing and fire.

Blanket bog is an increasingly rare habitat, and as such, receives priority status on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Lough Nabrickkeagh is a good example of an intact highland blanket bog and is of considerable conservation value.