

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: BALLYMACEGAN BOG NHA**

**SITE CODE: 00642**

Ballymacegan Bog NHA is situated in the floodplain of the River Shannon approximately 7 km south west of Banagher Co Offaly and 6 km north-west of Rathcabban, in the townland of Redwood, Co. Tipperary. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. Pasture grassland occurs to the south of the site. The River Shannon runs just north and west of the site and Redwood Bog is to the east.

The site consists of a small floodplain raised bog. The high bog is flat and uniform, with active peat-cutting on the south-west, south and the eastern boundaries. Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) scrub occurs on the old cutover. Flushes are found to the south of the high bog. The bog is surrounded by callow grassland on the west and northern boundaries.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a Midlands Raised Bog, and includes such species as cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium* and *E. vaginatum*), Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*), Carnation sedge (*Carex panicea*) and sundews (*Drosera anglica* and *D. rotundifolia*). Midland Raised Bog indicator species found on the bog include Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) and the bog moss *Sphagnum magellanicum*. Hummock-forming bog mosses on the site include *Sphagnum fuscum* and *S. imbricatum*, while *S. cuspidatum* and *S. palustre* are found in hollows, pools and drains. The site supports a number of other moss species including *Campylopus introflexus*, *Hypnum jutlandicum* and *Pleurozium schreberi*, and the liverworts *Frullania tamarisci*, *Lejeunea ulicina*, *Calypogeia muellerana* and *Odontoschisma sphagni*. Tear pools surrounded by pools colonised by algae occur to the south of the site in the vicinity of a flush. These pools support such species as the bog moss *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Bog-sedge (*Carex limosa*).

The flush to the south of the high bog supports Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), Bog-rosemary, Cranberry, Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), birch and the bog moss *Sphagnum recurvum*. A number of epiphytic lichens including *Hypogymnia physodes*, *Evernia prunastri* and *Lecanora chlorotera* occur on the birch trees. The cutover has areas of birch scrub and humid grassland.

Current landuse on the site consists of peat-cutting around the south and east of the site. Areas of cutover have been reclaimed for agricultural purposes to the south of the site. Peat-cutting on the site appears to be mechanised peat extraction for domestic purposes. Damaging activities associated with these landuses include drainage around the high bog and burning of the high bog. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Ballymacegan 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 hummock/hollow complexes, pools and flushes, as well as a number of scarce plant species. 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.