



Site Name: Scragh Bog SAC

Site Code: 000692

Scragh Bog lies approximately 10 km north-west of Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. This site comprises a wet transition fen with a floating root mat which has developed in a small oval-shaped depression. The fen is fed by weak surface springs and drains by an artificially defined outlet. The fen becomes open carr in the central area and in places grades into ombrotrophic bog.

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):

[7140] Transition Mires [7230] Alkaline Fens [1393] Slender Green Feather-moss (<i>Drepanocladus vernicosus</i>)
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Most of the fen vegetation at the site belongs to two broad types. The first is dominated by Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), with Long-stalked Yellow-sedge (*Carex lepidocarpa*), Narrow-leaved Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza traunsteineri*), Marsh Arrowgrass (*Triglochin palustris*), Grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*) and the following mosses: *Campylium stellatum*, *Scorpidium scorpioides* and *S. revolvens*. The second type is quaking fen in which Slender Sedge (*Carex lasiocarpa*) is dominant and is associated with Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*), Long-stalked Yellow-sedge and the moss species *Scorpidium revolvens*, *Bryum pseudotriquetrum* and *Cinclidium stygium*. Slender Cottongrass (*Eriophorum gracile*), a protected species which is also rare in Europe, occurs in this vegetation type. It is listed in the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015. A third category of fen vegetation is dominated by large sedges, such as Fibrous Tussock-sedge (*Carex appropinquata*).

The fen carr is dominated by willows (*Salix* spp.), including the rare Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea* subsp. *cinerea*) and by Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*). Round-leaved Wintergreen (*Pyrola rotundifolia*), a Red Data Book species, is found in this vegetation type.

Other rare plants found at the site include Slender Green Feather-moss (*Drepanocladus vernicosus*), a moss listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, and the arctic-alpine moss *Tomentypnum nitens*.

The embryonic raised bog communities contain species such as Bog-sedge (*Carex limosa*), Slender Sedge, Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Round-leaved Sundew

(*Drosera rotundifolia*), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), and a number of mosses, such as *Aulacomnium palustre*, *Sphagnum subnitens* and *S. contortum*.

The remaining terrestrial vegetation types (apart from some planted coniferous forestry at the southern end) are two grassland communities: the first is a tall meadow community in which Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) is dominant; the second is characterised by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*).

Two aquatic communities are also found: one is free-floating, in which Common Duckweed (*Lemna minor*) is prominent; and the other is a submerged community of stoneworts (*Chara* spp.).

The site also supports a uniquely complete fauna of transition mire invertebrates, including a number of species which are extremely rare in Northern Europe. Among the aquatic/subaquatic insects, *Chrysops sepulchralis* (Order Diptera), *Tetanocera freyi* (Order Diptera) and *Coenagrion lunulatum* (Order Odonata) provide examples of rare Northern European species. Two other flies *Acrometopia wahlbergi* and *Platycheirus perpallidus* (both Order Diptera) are rare species more closely associated with mire vegetation. The fen carr also has its own complement of associated invertebrates of scientific interest. Three flightless beetles (Order Coleoptera), which are indicative of very old wetlands, have also been identified from Scragh Bog - *Hydroporus glabriusculus*, *H. scalesianus* and *Laccornis oblongus*.

Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*, Order Lepidoptera), a butterfly listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, has been recorded from the site, but in its present condition the habitat is only marginally suitable for the species and any populations present are likely to be intermittent, small and short-lived.

Most of the site is managed as a Nature Reserve. The outflow stream is included in the site, since interference with this outflow could damage the site hydrology. A small section at the bottom of a field to the south is also included - this area supports a species-rich marsh/wet grassland vegetation. As well as being vulnerable to interference with its hydrology, Scragh Bog is also susceptible to eutrophication as a result of agricultural run-off from the surrounding land.

Scragh Bog contains excellent examples of two habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive - alkaline fen and transition mire. These habitats support a number of rare plants, notably *Drepanocladus vernicosus*, and also play host to a well developed invertebrate fauna.