

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LOUGHANILLOON BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 001020

Loughanilloon Bog NHA is located 8 km east-north-east of Tulla mainly in the townlands Drumminnav, Annaghneal, Kilnoe, and Ballynahinch in Co. Clare. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog, the site also includes a lake. The site is bounded in the north-east by the Cloghaun River and in the west by the main road between Broadford and Feakle.

This site includes a small area of raised bog and Lake Loughanilloon. The raised bog was formerly found either side of the lake but now all the remaining high bog is in the east of the site. The bog has low hummocks and a small flush in the north of the site. The only cutover found around the high bog is in the east of the site, however there are areas of cutover on the western side of the lake.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a Western Raised Bog, with Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*). The hummock forming bog mosses *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. papillosum* have been recorded on the high bog. Towards the centre of the bog Cottongrass becomes dominant and Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) and Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) are also present. Towards the river, in the north of the site, bog moss (*Sphagnum* sp.) cover increases to over fifty percent and Ling Heather, Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Cottongrass, Carnation Sedge and Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) also dominate. There is some evidence of burning on the high bog - the majority of the Ling Heather is quite small and lichens are largely absent. In the north of the bog there is a small Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) flush. Towards the northern boundary of the high bog there is a semi-natural margin from the high bog vegetation to Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) dominated grassland which in turn leads into Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) scrub adjacent to the river. In the south-east of the site there is an area of old hand-cut cutover that is now regenerating, this area is dominated by Cottongrass, Ling Heather, with Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*) in the ditches. The cutover around the south and south-west of the bog is dominated by Birch (*Betula* sp.) woodland with Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) in the understorey. The cutover on the western side of the lake has a small area of Birch woodland but has larger areas of Birch and Willow (*Salix* sp.) scrub. The open water of the lake is surrounded by a margin of wetland vegetation with Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Rushes (*Juncus* sp.) common. The fields of wet grassland north of the Cloghaun River provide an important habitat for bird species.

The internationally protected bird the Whooper Swan and three Red Data Book mammals Otter, Badger and Pine Marten have been recorded at the site.

Current landuses on the site include agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting. There are semi-improved fields all around the periphery of this site and there is evidence of

cattle grazing on the high bog. Farm slurry has been reported to be entering a drain that leads into the south of the lake. The forestry is not commercial and involves Birch being cut for fence posts. Hunting and fishing occur where the Cloghaun River enters the lake and bird species present at the site that would be hunted include Snipe, Mallard and Pheasant. Damaging activities associated with the agriculture include drainage throughout the site and burning of the high bog. All these activities have resulted in the loss of habitat, damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Loughanilloon 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. This site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummocks and a flush, the presence of a lake at the site adds to its diversity. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of the raised bog habitat type (over 50%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.

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