

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: HUNGRY HILL BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 001059

Hungry Hill Bog NHA contains a broad expanse of upland habitats, including blanket bog (both highland and mountain sub-types), heath, exposed rock, scree and precipitous cliffs. It is located 3 km east-north-east of the village of Adrigole, in the south-western end of the Caha Mountains, Co. Cork. The site encompasses nearly 9 square km of mountain range, extending from Hungry Hill in the south-west, across the peak of Derryclancy, to Coombane Mountain in the north-east. The site covers the townlands of Dromaclaurig, Inchintaglin, Glanmore, Coomgira, Derreen Upper and Derreen Lower. It encompasses elevations from 200 m to 685 m on the peak of Hungry Hill, the highest mountain on the Beara Peninsula. Old Red Sandstone is the predominant bedrock.

There are several areas of intact blanket bog, which are best-developed on plateaux, saddle areas, small basins between mountain peaks and gently sloping ridges. These areas have relatively deep peat and are only locally undergoing erosion. Smaller pockets of blanket bog and wet heath also occur within large areas of exposed rock.

The largest area of intact blanket bog habitat is within Derreen Upper bog, which occurs on a plateau on the southern flanks of Coombane Mountain. The bog surface here has a spongy texture that is locally quaking and possesses a series of hollows (dried out tension or tear pools) that are parallel to the slope contours. On the eastern side the bog slopes very steeply towards the confluence of two streams. It is noteworthy that here, despite a gradient of almost 40 degrees, the vegetation is still characteristic of blanket bog and does not have a heath element. The site also includes a small lake at the head of one of the streams.

The blanket bog vegetation has quite a uniform appearance, perhaps the result of earlier burning, but still contains a good range of characteristic species and an intact moss and liverwort cover. The dominant plants are Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*). Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) are common. Oblong-leaved sundew (*Drosera intermedia*), a species of local occurrence, is also present. The moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum* occurs in carpets and in low hummocks among other mosses (*Campylopus atrovirens*, *Sphagnum capillifolium*). The rare moss *Campylopus shawii*, a species restricted in Ireland to counties Cork, Kerry and Mayo, has been recorded from this part of the site. It is confined to high rainfall districts.

The site also contains a diversity of other habitats, including rivers and streams, wet and dry heath, dystrophic and oligotrophic lakes, upland grassland, dry broadleaf

semi-natural woodland, exposed rocks, scree and cliffs. The vegetation of heath and rocky areas includes Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Hair Grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), Greater Woodrush (*Luzula sylvatica*), Ling Heather, Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Purple Moor-grass and sedges (*Carex panicea*, *C. demissa*, *C. binervis*). On flatter terrain, Deergrass, Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) are prominent along with Kerry Butterwort (*Pinguicula grandiflora*) and Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*). Near streams, tussock-forming Purple Moor-grass dominates and the vegetation becomes more heath-like in character, with species such as Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*), Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) and the moss *Polytrichum commune*.

Two large oligotrophic lakes, Loughs Coomadayallig and Coomarkane, occur in deep corries on the eastern side of Hungry Hill. The flora of these lakes includes Water Lobelia (*Lobelia dortmanna*), Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*) and Bulbous Rush. Mosses and liverworts again are numerous around the wetter places and the Beech Fern (*Phegopteris connectilis*) occurs in two locations. Small boggy areas also occur beside the two lakes. Lough Coomadayallig contains a small island densely wooded with Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). The cliffs and ravines behind the lakes support mountain vegetation that has developed in crevices and on shallow peat. A suite of arctic-alpine species occur here, including the relatively scarce Starry Saxifrage (*Saxifraga stellaris*).

Peregrine Falcon, an Irish Red Data Book species, has been recorded on the site.

Current land use is mainly grazing of sheep, at a light to moderate intensity over the entire site. In many places, however, grazing has significantly reduced the quality of habitats and species diversity. Continued overgrazing is the main threat to the site. Peat cutting has taken place in adjacent areas of lowland blanket bog.

Hungry Hill Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance, containing a wide range of habitats and including a large expanse of upland blanket bog. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource. It is largely confined to coastal regions at temperate latitudes with cool, wet, oceanic climates. North-west Europe contains some of the best-developed areas of blanket bog in the world. The most extensive areas are found in Ireland and Britain. Upland blanket bogs, due to their exposure to severe climatic conditions at high elevations, are particularly vulnerable to erosion by human activities and extensive areas are currently undergoing active erosion due mainly to overgrazing. The current area of intact upland blanket bog in Ireland represents only a fraction of the original resource, due to the combined impacts of afforestation and overgrazing, and intact examples are therefore extremely valuable for nature conservation. Their long-term survival requires sensitive management.