



**Site Name: Dunragh Loughs/Pettigo Plateau SAC**

**Site Code: 001125**

Dunragh Lough/Pettigo Plateau is located 10 km south-east of Donegal town on the western shore of Lough Derg. It comprises an extensive complex of blanket bog, wet heath, lakes and pools covering an area of low hills and broad basins. It is bounded by extensive conifer plantations and areas of turbary. The site is underlain by metamorphic gneiss and schist.

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):

[4010] Wet Heath [7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)*
---

A large area of good quality, almost undisturbed, blanket bog of the highland type (with some local areas of lowland bog also) is found on the site. It supports species typical of the habitat and has a range of micro-topographical features (e.g. hummocks, inter-connecting pools and flushes), species and vegetation communities. It is largely dominated by Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). Examples of another Annex I E.U. Habitats Directive habitat, Rhynchosporion vegetation, have been recorded from this site, adding further to its diversity and conservation interest.

The site also includes large areas of wet heath, which often occur in association with blanket bog, and also with the many lakes and pools that occur. The wet heath supports typical species and vegetation communities. It is of good quality and generally in good condition, although there is some over-grazing and consequent erosion.

The lakes at this site are of the oligotrophic (naturally nutrient-poor) type and contain a typical flora of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*), Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), Broad-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*), Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*), Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*) and Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), amongst others. Oligotrophic lakes are also listed in the E.U. Habitats Directive.

A number of regionally scarce plants are found in association with bog, heath and lakes on the site, e.g. Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), Cowberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*) and the bog mosses, *S. fuscum* and *S. imbricatum*.

The site is used by several bird species that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Both Merlin and Golden Plover breed here, and a nationally important flock of Greenland White-fronted Goose (120 birds in 1994/95) feed on the site. Red-throated Diver have been reported from the site, and Snipe also occur and probably breed. Red Grouse has been recorded here.

The invasive alien Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) occurs at this site, and is a potential problem which may need control measures.

The site is of major importance for the large, mostly intact areas of good quality blanket bog and wet heath found. These constitute some of the most extensive areas of these habitats remaining in the county. Both habitats are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, the former with priority status, and, as such, are of considerable conservation significance. The site is of additional importance for the populations of several Red Data Book/Annex I E.U. Birds Directive bird species that use it. Part of the site has been designated a Special Protection Area, a Statutory Nature Reserve and a Biogenetic Reserve, and is also listed under the RAMSAR Convention.