



Site Name: Muckish Mountain SAC

Site Code: 001179

Muckish Mountain is situated 7 km west of Creeslough in Co. Donegal. It is a large flat-topped quartzite mountain with deposits of sand around it, which have been formed by the weathering of quartzite. Large areas of quartzite and schist scree occur on the mountainsides.

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):

[4060] Alpine and Subalpine Heaths [8220] Siliceous Rocky Slopes

The top of Muchish Mountain is covered with eroded quartzite rubble with a sparse covering of Dwarf Willow (*Salix herbacea*), Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) and the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum*. Much of the steeper slopes of the mountain are almost completely devoid of vegetation, being covered with loose scree. The north face of the mountain has several gullies and buttresses. Here, on rock ledges, are found Mountain Avens (*Dryas octopetala*), St. Patrick's-cabbage (*Saxifraga spathularis*) and Thrift (*Armeria maritima*). The bases of the slopes are covered with thin peat and are dominated by Heather. Some hand cutting of turf occurs here. Several pool and hummock bog systems and oligotrophic lakes add diversity to the site.

Alpine Saw-wort (*Saussurea alpina*), a Red Data Book species considered to be threatened in Ireland, occurs within the site. The site also includes several rare bryophyte (mosses and liverworts) species.

The main land uses within the site are grazing by sheep and hand-cutting of peat. The sands formed from the eroded quartzite have a uniform grain size and a low iron content and are ideal for glass manufacture. These deposits are not currently being quarried, although they have been exploited in the past. A stone quarry is located near Muckish Gap.

This highly scenic site is of ecological and conservation importance for the occurrence of two habitats that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive and for the presence of rare vascular plant and bryophyte species.