

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: DERRINLOUGH BOG NHA**

**SITE CODE: 001254**

Derrinlough Bog is situated 5km north-west of Moylough in the townlands of Derrinlough, Ballinphuill, Cloonkeen Oughter, Cuilmore, Cloonkeenleananode, Annaghbeg and Annaghmore West, Co. Galway. It can be accessed from the Mount Bellew-Dunmore road (R328). The site consists of two main habitats raised bog and fen. The raised bog includes both areas of high bog and cutover. The fen occurs on the in-filled lake called Derrin Lough to the north of the site. There is wet woodland encroaching into the fen and scrub occurs on the old cutover. The site is bounded by agricultural grassland and an esker ridge borders the site to the north.

There are two lobes of high bog present separated by an esker ridge. The high bog has been damaged by drainage and afforestation with forestry planted on both lobes and adjacent cutover to the north of the site.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a Western Raised Bog mainly dominated by Bog Cottons (*Eriophorum spp.*) and Deer grass (*Scirpus caespitosus*). The surface is quite wet and hummocks of bog moss (*Sphagnum capifolium*) are present but not abundant and Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) is quite sparse. There is no sign of burning with lichens (*Cladonia spp.*) quite abundant. Old relic hummocks are present with the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum*. There are a few algal pools present with some bog moss *Sphagnum cuspidatum*. A number of small flushes with Common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) occur on the bog surface. In the south-west there is a flush on the slope from the high bog dominated by Rushes (*Juncus spp.*), Common Reed, Purple Moor-grass and Bog Myrtle with Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) also present.

The conifer plantations on the high bog and cutover consist of Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta*) and Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*). There is extensive cutover to the south where active peat-cutting occurs. In the western region of the site there is old cutover dominated by Purple Moor-grass and Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*). Ling heather and regenerating bog mosses also occur here. Along the margin between the high bog and the stream there is a flush of Common Reed and Purple Moor-grass.

The fen occurs on the infilled lake called Derrin Lough and is dominated by Purple Moor-grass, Common Reed, Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*). The surface is very wet and quaking with some Saw Sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) dominating towards the centre. Hummocks of the bog moss *Sphagnum papillosum* are present, with the mosses *Calliergon cuspidatum* and *Polytricum commune*. There is a nice transition between the high bog and fen with seepage from the high bog down a steep slope dominated by large Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*E. vaginatum*) and Ling Heather over bog mosses. There is Birch (*Betula spp.*) woodland encroaching into the fen.

Other habitats present include old cutover, Birch and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) scrub, wet Birch woodland and streams. Red Grouse, a bird that is declining in numbers, occur on this site.

Current landuse on the site comprise active peat-cutting and forestry. Damaging activities associated with these landuses include drainage and burning of the high bog. There are also conifer seedlings encroaching onto the high bog. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Derrinlough 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 diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummock/hollow complexes, as well as a number of scarce plant species. The close association between raised bog habitat and fen provides added ecological interest. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of raised bog (over 50%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.