

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: MOORFIELD BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 001303

Moorfield Bog NHA is located 4 km west of Eyrecourt on the Ballinasloe-Portumna road (R355). It is situated in the townlands of Craughwell, Feaghbeg, Moorfield (Gortnamona), Cloonnamaskry and Raheen in east County Galway. It can be accessed by a bog track, from the R355, to the north-east of the site.

The site consists of a raised bog with a single dome of high bog and associated cutover. The main features of interest are the pools, flushes and wetter areas of the high bog. Towards the centre of the high bog, there is a good though somewhat limited pool system and a large flush is present in the north of the high bog. Two smaller flushes occur further south.

The high bog has vegetation typical of a Western Raised Bog, dominated by Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Hare's-tail cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), with the moss *Campylopus atrovirens* and liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea*. The high bog is quite wet with a good cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) is present and Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*) forms large clumps in places. The dried out marginal areas have little moss cover and are dominated by Ling Heather. Towards the centre of the high bog, there is a pool system with some pools containing algae. However, there are also wet and quaking areas with long tear pools filled with bog mosses (*Sphagnum cuspidatum* and *S. auriculatum*). Species associated with these pools include White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*), Brown-Beak-sedge (*R. fusca*), Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*). The hummock forming bog mosses *Sphagnum tenellum*, *S. capillifolium* and *S. papillosum* are also present. The rare bog moss *S. pulcrum* has been recorded on this raised bog and may still be present in the wetter areas at the centre of the site.

Additional habitat diversity is represented by the flushes, where the following species were recorded: Bog Myrtle, Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Saw Sedge (*Cladium mariscus*). The large flush to the north of the high bog is dominated by Purple Moor-grass and some Saw Sedge. Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) is common here. A smaller flush occurs to the south of the track with Purple Moor-grass and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*). Another small flush dominated by Common Reed occurs to the south-east with tall Ling Heather, Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*) also present.

There is cutover around most of this site with extensive peat-cutting in the west. Along the eastern margin there has also been some peat-cutting, but this is not as extensive. To the south there is old cutover dominated by Ling Heather with some Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Birch scrub. To the north and north-west, there are a

number of reclaimed fields of wet grassland on cutover. An area of dry grassland associated with a mineral ridge to the east is also included in the site. Gorse scrub grows on either side of the bog trackway and Birch scrub occurs on old cutaway to the south. Some of the ditches on the cutover contain Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), Pondweeds (*Potamogeton* spp.) and other aquatic plants, which reveal the groundwater influence in these locations. Gravel deposits occur in the north-west where they can be seen at the base of the drains, indicating that the peat is shallow in this vicinity.

Current landuse on the site consists of agricultural reclamation of old cutover and peat-cutting around the edge of the high bog. Damaging activities associated with this include drainage and burning, with large portions of the bog being burnt at regular intervals. These activities have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability. There is a small hill to the north, which is being partially quarried for gravel. Dumping of household appliances and agricultural waste has also been noted on this site.

Moorfield 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 wide range of raised bog habitats including a pool system and flushes, which along with the possible presence of the rare bog moss (*Sphagnum pulcrum*), add to the scientific interest of this site. 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.