

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: HODGESTOWN BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 001393

Hodgestown Bog NHA is located 4 km north-west of Prosperous, mostly in the townlands of Hodgestown, Coolearagh East and Garvoge in Co. Kildare. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog.

This raised bog was originally part of a much larger area of bog that has now been cutover and reclaimed for forestry and agriculture. Hodgestown Bog is separated by a mineral ridge from Ballynafagh SAC (391) and together these are two of the bogs at the eastern extreme of the range of raised bogs in Ireland. Although Hodgestown bog has no pools there are hummocks throughout the high bog and there is also a small hummock/hollow complex. Cutover is found all around the high bog.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a Midland Raised Bog, consisting of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) and Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*). The bog moss *Sphagnum tenellum* is common on the bog as is White Beak-sedge. Hummocks of the bog moss *Sphagnum capillifolium* are also common but only one hummock of *S. imbricatum* was recorded. The bog moss *S. magellanicum* is also frequently seen on the bog, in hollows with *S. tenellum* or with *S. cuspidatum* in in-filling old drains. In areas of the bog where there are signs of disturbance and bare peat patches are found the moss *Campylopus introflexus*, Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Ling Heather and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) tend to dominate. Much of the site was burnt in the 1970s but a subsequent survey reported that the bog was recovering well with active *Sphagnum* regeneration. There was a swallow hole in the east of the bog, with an associated soak area where the bog mosses *S. palustre* and *S. recurvum* were recorded, but this area has now been cutover. The high bog is surrounded by cutover much of which has been planted with coniferous forestry, especially in the south and east of the site.

Current landuses on the site include peat-cutting and forestry. Active peat-cutting is taking place all around the margins of the high bog. Coniferous forestry has been planted on much of the cutover, except in the north of the site. However, except for a small area on the west of the site most of the forestry has been felled. Damaging activities associated with these landuses include drainage throughout the site and burning of the high bog. All these activities have resulted in the loss of habitat, damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Hodgestown 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 good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummocks. 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.

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