

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: MOUNT JESSOP BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 001450

Mount Jessop Bog NHA is situated approximately 5 km south of Longford Town, mainly in the townlands of Mount Jessop and Curry, in Co. Longford. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The site is bordered by a road on its western side and by coniferous forestry on its southern and eastern sides.

Mount Jessop Bog consists of one main lobe of high bog. Almost 30 % of this is covered by coniferous forestry. There are wet areas with some spongy patches on the unforested areas, and some areas with pools and hummock/hollow systems. However, much of the high bog consists of a relatively intact bog moss (*Sphagnum* spp.) carpet, with occasional low hummocks. Tear-pools aligned with the long axis of the bog also occur. There are large areas of abandoned cutover at the south and west of the site which are colonised by scrub, and active peat-cutting still takes place at the south of the site.

The high bog at Mount Jessop possesses many of the species typical of Midland Raised Bogs in Ireland, such as Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) and bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). There are areas with hummock/hollow systems and pools. The pools contain the bog moss *S. cuspidatum* and *S. magellanicum* is found at the pool margins. The hummocks are mainly composed of bog mosses such as *S. capillifolium*, *S. imbricatum* and *S. fuscum*. Ling Heather is dominant in drier areas near the margins of the high bog. Pools filled with Bog Asphodel and algal material are found and are possibly tear-pools. The cutover areas of the site are mainly overgrown with Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) and Willow (*Salix* spp.) scrub and occasional conifer from failed forestry.

Red Grouse, a bird which is becoming increasingly rare in Ireland, has been recorded at this site, along with the Irish Hare, a Red Data Book species.

Current landuse on the site consists of peat-cutting along the southern margin of the high bog, and the drainage associated with this. A large area at the south of the site has been planted with coniferous forestry. Large portions of the bog have been burned in the past and areas of cutover bog have been reclaimed for agricultural purposes. 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.

Mount Jessop 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. 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.