

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BANGOR ERRIS BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 001473

Bangor Erris Bog NHA is an area of lowland blanket bog located 4 km south-west of the village of Bangor, in north-west Co. Mayo. The site is located mostly within the townlands of Muingnanarnad and Tawnanascol at an altitude of between 26 m and 30 m approximately. Bedrock geology is metamorphic schist and gneiss.

This site is an isolated, but remarkably intact, part of a once extensive lowland blanket bog which was drained and harvested for electricity generation at Bellacorick. The cutaway areas adjoin the northern, eastern, and southern margins of the site, while small areas of conifer forest plantations form the remaining boundaries. The bog surface itself is relatively intact and has abundant pools and small lakes with systems of wet lawns and well-developed hummocks. Internal bog drainage is evidenced by the presence of numerous swallow holes and flushed areas.

Much of the bog has vegetation characteristic of a lowland blanket bog, consisting of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), White-beak Sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) and Brown-beak Sedge (*Rhynchospora fusca*). Well-developed hummocks of bog mosses are common on the extensive flats, including *Sphagnum capillifolium* and two local mosses, *Sphagnum fuscum* and *S. imbricatum*. The numerous pools and small lakes on the site contain the mosses *Sphagnum cuspidatum* and *S. auriculatum*, with occasional lawns of *S. magellanicum*. The pools also contain Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Pipewort (*Eriocaulon aquaticum*), Lesser Bladderwort (*Utricularia minor*), Sundews (*Drosera anglica* and also the local *Drosera intermedia*) and the Common Spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*).

Red Data Book species recorded on this site include Red Grouse, Golden Plover, Merlin and Otter. Common Frog also occurs. The site used to support a flock of Greenland White-fronted Goose.

Potential threats to the site include the possible expansion of commercial forestry and peat extraction. The consequence of previous such activities are evident, with the presence of deep drains around much of the edges of the site. On the eastern side, some of these drains are active while others have begun to infill or have collapsed. The edge of the bog is therefore drier than internal areas. There is little evidence of other damaging activities such as burning or overgrazing.

Bangor Erris Bog NHA is an intact area of lowland blanket bog of considerable conservation significance. It supports a good range of habitat features including hummocks, lawns, dystrophic lakes, swallow holes, flushes and pool systems. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource and is largely confined to coastal regions with cool, wet, oceanic climates at temperate latitudes. North-west Europe

contains some of the best-developed areas of blanket bog in the world. Lowland blanket bog comprises less than 3% of the world's peatlands. In Europe this type of blanket bog is restricted to Ireland, Britain, Norway and Iceland. The lowland blanket bog that occurs in Ireland is considered to be an extreme hyperoceanic variant of the habitat type, found nowhere else in the world except on the coastal fringes of north-west Scotland.