

Site Name: Mocarha Lough SAC

Site Code: 001536

Mocarha Lough comprises a shallow wetland complex situated 8 km east of Cong, in Co. Mayo. It lies in a linear depression in the Carboniferous limestone running north-eastwards from Lough Corrib. The predominant habitat on the site is fen, but areas of dry calcareous grassland, wet grassland and Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) scrub also occur. Very little open water remains at the site.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[7210] <i>Cladium</i> Fens*

Mocarha Lough includes a large area of fen vegetation that is dominated by Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*), accompanied by some Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*). Areas of fen dominated by Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) are scattered through the site, but are particularly well-developed near the southern and northern margins of the site. The scarce moss *Drepanocladus cossonii* has been recorded from *Schoenus* fen in the north of the site.

Calcareous heath/grassland vegetation occurs on high ground surrounding the centre of the site. This vegetation is notable for the presence of Juniper, which occurs here in abundance, along with such species as Black Bog-rush, Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Blue Moor-grass (*Sesleria albicans*), Wild Thyme (*Thymus praecox*), Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), amongst others. Areas of heathy calcareous grassland with Juniper are also found on the western margin of the site.

The site supports locally important numbers of wetland birds, especially Snipe and Mallard.

Mocarha Lough is of considerable conservation significance as it supports one of the largest stands of Great Fen-sedge in the west of Ireland. This habitat is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive with priority status. The presence of areas of heathy calcareous grassland, Juniper scrub and *Schoenus* fen adds considerably to the importance of the site.