

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: POLLATOMISH BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 001548

Pollatomish Bog NHA is an area of lowland blanket bog adjacent to the Glenamoy - Belmullet road about 7 km south of Pollatomish in the townlands of Muingeroon, Muingeroon North, Muingeroon South and Bellanaboy in Co. Mayo. The site is located on the slopes of Muingeroon Hill and covers an altitude range of between 20 m and 140 m. Bedrock geology consists of schist.

The blanket bog surface is quite wet and supports bog moss lawns (mainly *Sphagnum papillosum* and *S. capillifolium*). The most intact areas are dominated by Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) and Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*). Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and Mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*) are common, while White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) are occasional. Lichen species are common (*Cladonia ciliata*, *C. uncialis*, *C. portentosa*) as are mosses (*Campylopus introflexus*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, *Leucobryum glaucum*) and liverworts (*Pleurozia purpurea*).

Shallow pools, many of which are in-filling with Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Lesser Bladderwort (*Utricularia minor*), Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*) and bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) are also present. Further up the slopes the peat becomes shallower and the vegetation more heath-like in character, dominated by Ling Heather. Juniper (*Juniperus communis*), an uncommon species on bogs, is present in this area and a number of shallow peat cracks support Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*), Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*) and Heath Milkwort (*Polygala serpyllifolia*).

The lower northern slopes are degraded through grazing and erosion and are generally dominated by grasses and sedges. The following species are amongst those found in this area; cottongrasses, Deergrass, Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Green-ribbed Sedge (*Carex binervis*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*) and Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*).

The Irish Hare and Common Frog, both Irish Red Data Book species, frequent the site.

The land is used for rough grazing of sheep and cattle and a number of drains have been excavated in the bog. Cutting of turf by hand and machine is also occurring along the site margins. Conifer seedlings from adjoining plantations are colonising the bog.

Pollatomish Bog NHA is a lowland blanket bog of conservation importance as it contains a good diversity of microhabitats including flushes, the headwaters of a number of small streams and a number of bog pools. The presence of Irish Hare and Common Frog is also of note as is the occurrence of Juniper. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource. It 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.