

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: NURE BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 001725

Nure Bog NHA is located 11 km south-west of Mullingar, mainly in the townlands of Lilliput (Nure) and Monaghanstown in Co. Westmeath. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog and adjoins Lough Ennell to the east.

This raised bog was originally part of a larger area that has now been mostly cutover and reclaimed for agriculture. Although this bog has no pools there are hummocks throughout the high bog. Cutover is found all around the high bog and there is an area of coniferous forestry on the cutover in the south of the site.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a Midland Raised bog, consisting of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cottongrass (*Eriophorum* sp.), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) and Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*). The north of the site is wetter than the south, with the bog mosses *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. papillosum* forming the majority of the hummocks, but there are also occasional *S. imbricatum* and *S. fuscum* hummocks. The bog moss *S. subnitens* is also a species of note in the north of the site. Other bog moss species recorded for the site include *S. magellanicum* and the aquatic bog moss *S. cuspidatum*. The hummocks in the north of the site are colonised by Ling Heather, Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Common Cottongrass (*E. angustifolium*), Cranberry, Bog-rosemary, Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), with Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) found in the channels. In the southern half of the site the high bog is dryer and firmer with Ling Heather dominating. Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) is also recorded on the hummocks in the south of the site with the moss *Campylopus introflexus* colonising bare peat. On the cutover in the south-west of the site there is an area of Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) woodland with Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Willow (*Salix* sp.) occasionally recorded amongst the Downy Birch. In the north-west of the site there has been some regeneration of old cutover with most of the species present on the high bog and good *Sphagnum* regeneration recorded in this region. In the north-east of the site old cutover is dominated by Ling Heather and Purple Moor-grass, with Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Bilberry, Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and small areas of Downy Birch also present. On cutover in the south-east of the site there is a dense stand of Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) and there is some coniferous forestry on cutover in the very south of the site.

Current landuses on the site include peat-cutting, forestry, agriculture and shooting. Currently very little active peat-cutting is taking place in the east and south of the site but there are reports of more cutting being planned for the site. There is coniferous forestry on the cutover in the south of the site.

The main area of agricultural land within the site is in the south-east. Damaging activities associated with these landuses include drainage throughout the site and burning of the high bog. There is evidence of clay pigeon shooting on the site and dumping has been reported for this site. 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.

Nure 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 and directly adjoins Lough Ennell cSAC (685). Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of this habitat type (over 50%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.