

Site Name: Sonnagh Bog SAC

Site Code: 001913

Sonnagh Bog is located at the northern end of the Slieve Aughty Mountains, approximately 8 km south-west of Loughrea in Co. Galway. The site ranges in altitude from 198 m to 317 m. The topography of the site is of a narrow plateau and valleys, one of which is occupied by Lough Belsrah.

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):

[7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)*

The slopes of Sonnagh Bog are dominated by tracts of Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) which cover a carpet of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). Distinct flat areas occur on the lower slopes, which are devoid of Purple Moor-grass and dominated by Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*). A further area devoid of Purple Moor-grass occurs on a wet plateau above 300 m. This area is slightly quaking and supports bog mosses, and is similarly dominated by Bog Asphodel, with Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) also occurring. Mats of algae and hummocks composed of *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. fuscum* are also found in this area.

The southern end of Lough Belsrah supports poor fen vegetation, dominated by mosses such as *Sphagnum recurvum*, *S. palustre* and *Aulacomnium palustre*, and vascular plants including Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), Mud Sedge (*Carex limosa*) and Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*). At other flushes within the site, Marsh Violet (*Viola palustris*), Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), Lesser Clubmoss (*Selaginella selaginoides*) and sedges (*Carex lepidocarpa*, *C. echinata* and *C. panicea*) occur.

The aquatic and emergent vegetation of Lough Belsrah includes Alternate Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum alterniflorum*), White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*), Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*) and Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*).

Red Grouse have been reported from the site. Snipe are regular winter visitors and may also breed.

Sonnagh Bog is important as a good example of an intact, lightly grazed, highland blanket bog. Blanket Bog is a rare and increasingly threatened habitat that is listed with priority status on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.