



Site Name: Corliskea/Trien/Cloonfelliv Bog SAC

Site Code: 002110

Corliskea/Trien/Cloonfelliv Bog SAC, located approximately 5 km south of Castlerea and straddling the Roscommon/Galway county border, comprises a complex of three raised bogs. Among its most interesting features, the site contains large, wet, raised bog with well-developed pool and hummock systems, large diverse flush systems, subterranean streams with swallow-holes and a lake.

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):

[7110] Raised Bog (Active)*
[7120] Degraded Raised Bog
[7150] Rhynchosporion Vegetation
[91D0] Bog Woodland*

Active raised bog comprises areas of high bog that are wet and actively peat-forming, where the percentage cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) is high, and where some or all of the following features occur: hummocks, pools, wet flats, *Sphagnum* lawns, flushes and soaks. Degraded raised bog corresponds to those areas of high bog whose hydrology has been adversely affected by peat cutting, drainage and other land use activities, but which are capable of regeneration. The Rhynchosporion habitat occurs in wet depressions, pool edges and erosion channels where the vegetation includes White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) and/or Brown Beak-sedge (*R. fusca*), and at least some of the following associated species, Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), sundews (*Drosera* spp.), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*).

At this site the uncut high bog comprises both active and degraded areas. The active bog is largely confined to wetter, central areas. Here there are well-developed pool and hummock systems, in which hummocks are formed by bog mosses (e.g. *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. subnitens*) and are colonised by species such as Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Deergrass and Carnation Sedge. Rhynchosporion vegetation is best developed in the wet areas of the active bog. This is typically dominated by floating rafts of the aquatic bog moss *Sphagnum cuspidatum*. Other frequent species of the habitat include *Sphagnum auriculatum*, Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), White Beak-sedge, Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*) and Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*). The relatively rare plant species Brown Beak-sedge has been recorded from pool areas within the site recently.

The vegetation of the degraded bog areas is also composed of peatland species but with species of drier bog being more dominant – e.g. mainly Deergrass, Common Cottongrass, Heather, Hare’s-tail Cottongrass (*E. vaginatum*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Bog Asphodel and Carnation Sedge. The cover of *Sphagnum* moss is low due to the combined effects of drainage (mostly caused by peripheral peat-cutting) and repeated burning.

A remarkable feature of these bogs is the presence of well-developed, wooded flushes, some of which conform to the E.U. Habitats Directive priority habitat ‘Bog Woodland’. The canopy is generally of Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), and some areas have a shrub layer composed of Heather, Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) and Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*). The ground layer includes species such as Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and buckler-ferns (*Dryopteris carthusiana* and *D. dilatata*), and a characteristic feature is the presence of abundant bog mosses (including *Sphagnum recurvum* var. *mucronatum*, *S. squarrosum*, *S. fimbriatum* and *S. palustre*) which form thick carpets. The scarce species Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) is abundant here, creeping over the bog mosses. On Trien Bog the rare liverwort species *Cephaloziella elachista* has been recorded in this habitat. The rare shrub Alder Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*), which is listed in the Irish Red Data Book, occurs at a swallow-hole flush on Corliskea Bog. Non-wooded flushes also occur in the site. Some of these feature stands of Bog-myrtle with Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Purple Moor-grass.

A small lake occurs on the southern side of Corliskea Bog, which is colonised by Bogbean. At several locations, series of swallow-holes occur along the courses of subterranean streams.

A major threat to raised bogs is drainage, associated with turf-cutting or afforestation, which upsets the delicate hydrology of these ecosystems. Fires cause damage due to removal of the vegetation and dessication of the bog surface. Parts of this site have been burned in the past, and although regeneration of the vegetation is occurring, recovery is slow.

This site is of international ecological significance as a largely intact complex of raised bogs. Intact raised bogs are a rare habitat, now much restricted in their European and Irish distribution due mainly to commercial peat extraction. Corliskea, Trien and Cloonfelliv Bogs are excellent examples of this habitat, and show a good diversity of microhabitats which are typical of raised bogs. The wooded flushes are of special significance, as bog woodland is extremely rare and the examples here are of high quality and support a number of scarce and rare species. Both raised bog and bog woodland receive priority status on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.