

Site Name: Bolingbrook Hill SAC

Site Code: 002124

Situated approximately 6 km south-east of Silvermines village in Co. Tipperary, this upland site comprises Bolingbrook Hill and the nearby eastern slopes of Silvermine Mountains in Curryquin and Mucklin townlands. Most of the land is above 270 m and the highest point is at 404 m.

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):

[4010] Wet Heath
[4030] Dry Heath
[6230] Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> Grassland*

Unimproved, species-rich upland grassland covers the lower slopes of Bolingbrook Hill and much of Curryquin. The dominant grasses found are Mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*), bent grasses (*Agrostis* spp.) and Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*). Moss and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) cover is extensive. The herb component is diverse and many fields have gorse (*Ulex* sp.) scrub or scattered Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) shrubs. Other species present include Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), Sheep's-fescue (*Festuca ovina*), Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*) and Mat-grass.

A small area of blanket bog occurs on the western side of Bolingbrook Hill. Its margins are damaged by former peat-cutting activities. Some blanket bog also occurs in Mucklin. Wet heath is the main habitat in the western part of this site, usually occurring in close association with acidic grassland. Heath species present include Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Bog-myrtle (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*), Deergass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Green-ribbed Sedge (*Carex binervis*) and Tormentil. In the wetter areas, Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and Greater Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) occur. Mosses are a feature, especially bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). On some of the steeper slopes where the peaty soils are thin, good quality dry heath occurs. Typical species here include Heather, Mat-grass, Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), Tormentil, Bell heather (*Erica cinerea*) and Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*), and moss cover is extensive in places. Scrub comprised of willow (*Salix* spp.), Hawthorn, Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) has also developed on parts of the steep slopes.

A good diversity of animal species associated with peatland habitats occurs, including Irish Hare, Red Grouse, Common Frog and Viviparous Lizard.

Agricultural improvement and afforestation are the main threats to the site. Much of the surrounding land is extensively planted with conifers.

Bolingbrook Hill is a comparatively small site which contains a range of habitats, and species, including three habitat types listed on the E.U. Habitats Directive. It is of particular importance for the good quality examples of species-rich, unimproved upland grassland found. This habitat is becoming increasingly rare in Ireland and Europe and is listed with priority status in the Directive. The presence of good quality wet and dry heath, which are also listed on this Annex, contributes to the overall importance of the site.