

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: CORRY MOUNTAIN BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 002321

Corry Mountain Bog NHA is an area of upland blanket bog, straddling the Roscommon/Leitrim county boundary, located about 4 km west of Lough Allen. The site drains into the Owengar River via surface streams on its northern side and into the Arigna River, which flows into Lough Allen, on its southern side. Mature forestry plantations form parts of the northern and southern boundaries and the site extends down the lower slopes of Corry Mountain as far as fields of heathy grassland and rush pasture. A number of wind power installations are sited on the summit of the mountain.

The site consists primarily of intact upland blanket bog. The vegetation is dominated by species such as Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and cotton grasses (*Eriophorum angustifolium*, *E. vaginatum*), with Fir Clubmoss (*Huperzia selago*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) and Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*). The site is particularly notable for its large population of the rare northern montane orchid Lesser Twayblade (*Listera cordata*). Species more typical of lowland areas, including Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), also occur within the site.

The bog surface is wet and quaking in places, where bog moss cover is at its highest, notably in flushes and in bog moss lawns. Flushes are colonised by Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*) and the bog mosses *Sphagnum capillifolium*, *S. papillosum*, *S. palustre*, *S. cuspidatum*, *S. magellanicum* and *S. subnitens*. Large flushes dominated by *S. recurvum* also occur on the western part of the site. Other mosses on the site include *Aulacomnium palustre*, *Polytrichum commune*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, *Rhytidiadelphus loreus*, and *Racomitrium lanuginosum*, the latter occasionally forming large hummocks. Liverworts include *Mylia taylorii*, *Diplophyllum albicans* and *Pleurozia purpurea*. Lichens on the bog include *Cladonia portentosa* and *C. uncialis*.

Small areas of re-vegetated cutover and more recently disturbed peat occur locally, the latter now colonising with cotton grasses, Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and bog moss (*Sphagnum tenellum*). Small swallow-holes at the base of rock outcrops are quite common and these are colonised by Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) seedlings, Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) and Broad Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*).

Wet heath, dry heath and acid grassland habitats occur on thinner peat soils forming transition zones to blanket bog.

Red Data Book species recorded on this site include Irish Hare, Hen Harrier, Golden Plover and Red Grouse.

Considerable fragmentation of the blanket bog in this upland area has resulted from afforestation on the lower northern and southern slopes of Corry Mountain. A wind power installation, centred largely on old mine workings on the summit of the mountain, but extending a short distance onto deep blanket bog, have been excluded from the site. Current land uses on the site include peat cutting and sheep grazing, while on lower slopes new plantation forestry has encroached on heath and bog habitat. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage and accidental fires. Recent fire has damaged vegetation on the blanket bog immediately west of the wind power facility. These activities have resulted in habitat loss and caused localised damage to the hydrological status of the site. Generally, however, there has been little burning of this extensive blanket bog site, while grazing pressure by sheep is notably minimal.

Corry Mountain Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance comprising a relatively intact area of upland blanket bog. The site supports a good diversity of blanket bog microhabitats, including bog moss lawns and flushes. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource. It is largely confined to coastal regions at temperate latitudes with cool, wet, oceanic climates. North-west Europe contains some of the best-developed areas of blanket bog in the world. The most extensive areas are found in Ireland and Britain. Upland blanket bogs, due to their exposure to severe climatic conditions at high elevations, are particularly vulnerable to erosion by human activities and extensive areas are currently undergoing active erosion due mainly to overgrazing. The current area of intact upland blanket bog in Ireland represents only a fraction of the original resource, due to the combined impacts of afforestation and overgrazing, and intact examples are therefore extremely valuable for nature conservation. Their long-term survival requires sensitive management. The presence of wet heath, dry heath and acid grassland on the site, and the occurrence of Cranberry, a large population of Lesser Twayblade and several Red Data Book species, adds significantly to its conservation value.