

Site Name: Carn Park Bog SAC

Site Code: 002336

Carn Park Bog is situated 8 km east of Athlone, in the townlands of Tullywood, Carn Park, Cappaghbrack, Warren High and Moydrum, Co. Westmeath. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The margins of the site are bounded by roads on the north, west and southern margins and forestry on the east.

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

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.

This site consists of a bog which has developed in a basin, which is almost divided into two by a ridge of mineral material. North of this ridge, there is only a narrow strip of bog, and thus the main body of the bog lies south of the ridge. The surface of the southern section is very wet with undulating hummock/hollow micro-topography. Forestry plantations occur on the east and southern margins of the site and are present on the high bog in the south-east and south-west. Extensive areas of cutover are found all around the margins of the high bog and in particular in the north and west.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of the Midlands Raised Bog type, in particular the expanse of uncut bog to the south and south-east. The vegetation consists of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*) and the lichen *Cladonia portentosa*. Cottongrasses (*Eriophorum vaginatum* and *E. angustifolium*) replace Carnation Sedge as co-dominants in the southern and central areas. The surface is very wet with an undulating hummock/hollow micro-topography. Pools and some drains have become infilled on the high bog with bog mosses (*Sphagnum cuspidatum*, *S. magellanicum* and *S. capillifolium*), White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) and Common Cottongrass (*E. angustifolium*). Bog mosses cover much of the surface, forming hummocks of *S. papillosum* and the rarer *S. imbricatum* and *S. fuscum*.

Heather, Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*E. vaginatum*), Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) and Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) cover the hummocks. Carpets of bog moss (*S. capillifolium*, *S. magellanicum*, and *S. cuspidatum*) occur throughout the site. The abundance of a nationally rare species of bog moss, *Sphagnum pulchrum*, is noteworthy. This moss frequently dominates wet channels on the high bog. Fir Clubmoss (*Huperzia selago*) is also found on the bog. Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) is colonising the eastern part of the bog.

Current land use on the site consists of mechanised peat-cutting, forestry and agricultural reclamation around the edge of the high bog. Peat-cutting is carried out along the track and road, which form the northern and north-western site boundaries. Afforestation occurs on the bog margins and extends onto intact or high bog. Some agricultural grassland has been reclaimed from cutover bog to the south and north-west of the site. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage throughout the site (both old and recent) and extensive burning of the bog. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and which pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Carn Park Bog is a site of considerable conservation significance as it comprises 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 hummock/hollow complexes, pools and *Sphagnum* lawns, as well as the rare species *Sphagnum pulchrum*. Active raised bog is listed as a priority habitat on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Priority status is given to habitats and species that are threatened throughout the E.U. Ireland has a high proportion of the E.U. resource of this habitat type (over 60%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.