



**Site Name: Crosswood Bog SAC**

**Site Code: 002337**

Crosswood Bog is situated approximately 5 km east of Athlone, Co. Westmeath, mainly in the townlands of Crosswood, Glenaghanvoneen, and Creggan Lower. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The northern margin of the bog lies along the southern side of the Dublin-Galway railway line.

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
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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 site consists of a quaking bog, with a well-developed sequence of pools, hollows and hummocks, and a flush supporting woodland. Cutover areas occur on all margins of the bog.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of the Midlands Raised Bog type, consisting of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and the bog moss *Sphagnum magellanicum*. The northern and eastern parts of the bog are locally wet and occasionally quaking, and are characterised by flats with Bog Asphodel and hummocks of *Sphagnum imbricatum* – this is a scarce species both on the site and nationally. There are well-developed pools with healthy populations of *S. cuspidatum*. Regenerating bog moss hummocks (*S. magellanicum*) and a good bog moss carpet (*S. capillifolium* and *S. papillosum*) can be observed to the north-west. A flush is located in the centre of the bog and supports a thick carpet of mosses and liverworts, such as *Aulaacomnium palustre*, *Polytrichum commune* and *Pleurozium schreberi*. Here also are found Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Heather, Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), pines (*Pinus* spp.) and Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*). The south-western end is drier with a poorer cover of *Sphagnum* and an abundance of Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Heather, Bog

Asphodel and lichens (*Cladonia* spp.). The site is noteworthy for the presence of the rare bog moss *Sphagnum pulchrum* which is locally frequent in the pool system and the quaking flats to the east; *Sphagnum fuscum*, a relatively scarce species, is found on the drier hummocks here also. Fir Clubmoss (*Huperzia selago*) is also found on the bog. Old cutover bog supports scrub vegetation of Heather, gorse (*Ulex* sp.), Downy Birch and willows (*Salix* spp.).

Current land use on the site consists of peat-cutting around the edge of the high bog; it is more intensively cut on the western and southern margins. While the northern margin has drains that extend into the intact bog, it is relatively protected from development due to the proximity to the railway. Forestry is found to the south of the site on areas of cutover bog. Some fields on old cutover are used for pasture and are presently undergoing further reclamation. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage throughout the site (both old and recent) and extensive burning of the high bog. These are activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Crosswood 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 wooded flushes. Furthermore, it supports a population of the rare bog moss *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 total E.U. resource of this habitat type (over 60%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.