

Site Name: Drumalough Bog SAC

Site Code: 002338

Drumalough Bog is located 5 km north-west of Castlerea in Co. Roscommon, mainly in the townlands of Drumalough, Breanabeg and Cloonfower. The site comprises three separate sub-sites which were once part of an extensive bog complex, but which are now separated by cutover bog. Two of these sub-sites contain high bog, with associated cutover bog, and the third area is open water (Drumalough) surrounded by wet grassland and freshwater marsh.

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

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*).

The eastern sub-site of high bog is distinctly domed and supports typical raised bog vegetation and micro-topographical features such as hummocks, pools and flats. The bog surface is very wet and, in places, quaking, and an extensive pool system occurs. An area of flushed vegetation exists at the north-western side, separating the wetter bog from a drier area. The western sub-site of high bog is drier, but also includes typical raised bog vegetation as well as a pool system in its eastern lobe, and there is a large pond in the southern end. Commercial forestry occurs quite near the pool systems on both raised bog sites.

The two raised bogs in this site are examples of Western Raised Bogs, with species such as Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Carnation Sedge, the moss *Racomitrium languinosum*, the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea* and lichens (*Cladonia* spp.). Hare's-tail

Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Deergrass and Bog Asphodel are also found here. The vegetation of the pool systems on both raised bog sites is dominated by the bog moss, *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Marsh Lousewort (*Pedicularis palustris*). The moss *Campylopus atrovirens* is found on the margins of many of the pools where the water level appears to be becoming lower. Plant species occurring in flushes on the site include Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), the bog moss *Sphagnum magellanicum*, Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) and Bog-sedge (*Carex limosa*). The third sub-site, the lake, is surrounded by wet grassland which grades into freshwater marsh. The vegetation includes sedge species such as *Carex rostrata*, *C. flacca* and *C. paniculata*, Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*), Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*) and Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*). The scarce Dioecious Sedge (*C. dioica*) and a species of stonewort (*Chara* sp.) are found in a calcareous flush near the lake margin.

Red Grouse, a Red Listed species that is becoming increasingly rare in Ireland, has been recorded at the site. The lake, Drumalough, is used by a variety of other bird species, including Mallard, Heron and Little Grebe.

Current land use on the site consists of localised peat-cutting on the thin central area of the western sub-site. Peat-cutting appears to have ceased in the eastern sub-site. There are areas of commercial forestry on both areas of high bog. Areas of cutover bog have been reclaimed for agricultural purposes and an area to the north-west of the eastern sub-site is grazed by cattle. Damaging activities occurring on this site include dumping, burning, peat-cutting, afforestation and associated drainage. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site.

Drumalough 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, flushes and regenerating cutover. The lake adds further to the diversity of the site. 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.