



Site Name: Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough SAC

Site Code: 002339

Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough is situated approximately 9 km west of Athlone, mainly in the townlands of Skeanamuck, Carrowkeeran and Pollalaher, in Co. Roscommon. The site comprises a relatively small portion of what was once a large bog complex, and includes areas of high bog and cutover bog, and also the turlough, Corkip Lough.

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):

[3180] Turloughs*
[7110] Raised Bog (Active)*
[7120] Degraded Raised Bog
[7150] Rhynchosporion Vegetation
[91D0] Bog Woodland*

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 high bog consists of a single dome, with a large area of bog woodland and flush in the centre. It is surrounded on three sides by esker ridges and limestone bedrock. These ridges are host to areas of species-rich grassland. Cutover bog occurs all around the margins of the high bog, some sections of which flood at times, and there is an area of commercial forestry at the eastern margin. The lake retains a small area of open water in the summer. It is surrounded by lowland wet grassland which is flooded in the winter.

This site contains an example of a Midland Raised Bog, with species such as Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bog Asphodel, Common and Hare's-tail Cottongrasses (*Eriophorum*

angustifolium and *E. vaginatum*), Carnation Sedge and Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*). Also occurring are the bog mosses *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, *S. magellanicum* and *S. papillosum*, amongst others. There are areas on the high bog with apparently old pools which are now infilled with Bog Asphodel, and algal pools are also found. The hummock and hollow topography typical of raised bogs is absent from this site. There are a number of stands of Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) scattered over the bog. The central flush on the high bog contains an area of bog woodland, with Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) of various age classes. Cranberry is abundant here and the vegetation is lush in places, with many bog moss species occurring. Scarce species found here include Brown Beak-sedge and Bog-sedge (*Carex limosa*). The lichens on the bark and branches are of exceptional abundance and diversity. The treeless flush which surrounds the wooded area has an abundance of bog mosses, Heather and cottongrasses. Mosses other than *Sphagnum* found in the flushes include *Aulacomnium palustre*, *Hypnum jutlandicum* and *Breutelia chrysocoma*. An unusual feature of the flush is the occurrence of small specimens of Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*) scattered uniformly over the area.

The cutover areas associated with the high bog are mostly dominated by Heather, Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Downy Birch scrub. An area of cutover bog at the north of the site is frequently flooded and is dominated by Purple Moor-grass and Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*). A very small, but extremely species-rich, damp calcareous stony community is found at the north of the site where a gravel ridge disappears under the cutover bog. Here, Black Bog-rush, Mountain Everlasting (*Antennaria dioica*), Lesser Clubmoss (*Selaginella selaginoides*) and many other species are found, including a diverse lichen flora. Other, more calcareous and drier grassland areas support species such as Carlina Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*), Wild Thyme (*Thymus praecox*) and Mouse-ear Hawkweed (*Hieracium pilosella*).

Corkip Lough, a turlough, is fringed by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and sedges (*Carex* spp.), along with many wetland herbs. Other species found here include Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*), Greater Spearwort (*Ranunculus lingua*), Water Plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*) and Mare's-tail (*Hippuris vulgaris*). The surrounding grassland hosts a number of species of interest, including Few-flowered Spike-rush (*Eleocharis quinqueflora*), Grass-of-parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*) and Water Germander (*Teucrium scordium*). The latter species is of particular interest as it is otherwise known only from the banks of the River Shannon and in some turloughs in Counties Clare and Tipperary.

Apart from its unusual flora, Corkip Lough is also important for local birdlife. There are large nesting colonies of Lapwing and Redshank, and occasional Snipe. The wetter areas are popular feeding grounds for many species of waders. In the winter, large numbers of Plover, Curlew and Lapwing are found here. It is also frequented by smaller songbirds such as Reed Bunting and Sedge Warblers. Red Grouse, a species which is becoming increasingly rare in Ireland, has been recorded from Ballynamona Bog.

The rare aquatic invertebrate *Eurycercus glacialis* (Order Cladocera) is found at Corkip Lough, one of the few sites in Ireland where it occurs.

Current land use on the site consists of limited peat-cutting at the north-east and south-west of the site. There is a small area of commercial forestry at the east of the site. Some areas of cutover bog at the south have been reclaimed for agriculture. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include frequent burning. This recurrent burning is having a serious drying effect on the bog. Drainage, for the most part, is restricted to the cutover areas of the bog. These are all 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.

Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough is a site of considerable conservation significance as it consists of a raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of raised bog (over 60%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level. Active raised bog, bog woodland and turlough are listed as priority habitats on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Priority status is given to habitats and species that are threatened throughout the E.U. Areas of species-rich calcareous grassland add to the diversity of the site.