



Site Name: Ardaguillion Bog SAC

Site Code: 002341

Ardaguillion Bog is located 5 km north-east of Edgeworthstown, mainly in the townlands of Cloonshannagh (Coolamber Manor Demesne) and Ardaguillion in Co. Longford. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The site is bounded in the north-east by the local road running to Coolagherty.

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*).

This site is the remnant of a much larger bog that is now cutover and afforested. There are areas of hummocks and pools in the centre of the high bog and the ground is wet and quaking. There is one flush in the centre of the high bog. There is a small area of coniferous forestry on a section of high bog and cutover in the south-west of the site. Cutover bog is found all around this site.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a Midland Raised Bog, consisting of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), White Beak-sedge, Bog Asphodel and Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*). The bog mosses *Sphagnum papillosum*, *S. capillifolium* and *S. magellanicum* are common on the high bog, and *S. imbricatum* is found at the centre of the site. At the centre of the high bog there are frequent pools that all contain the bog moss *S. cuspidatum*. Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*) is found in all the pools in the

centre of the bog and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) is present in some. The inter-pool areas have a high bog moss cover. Many hummocks have good clumps of the lichens *Cladonia portentosa* and *C. uncialis*. On the south-west margins of the high bog there are some young Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta*) but none are thriving. There is one very wet flush in the centre of the high bog with Common Cottongrass (*E. angustifolium*), extensive lawns of the bog moss *S. cuspidatum* and some Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). The cutover in the north-west, east and south-east is dominated by Purple Moor Grass, Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) and Common Cottongrass. There is some Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) scrub in the east of the site and extensive Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) scrub in the south-east.

Current land uses on the site include forestry, peat-cutting and agriculture. The forestry is found on a small section of high bog and adjoining cutover in the south-west of the site. Areas of cutover in the south and west of the site that were previously forested have only recently been clear-felled. Active peat-cutting is taking place in the north-west, east and south-east of the site. Two fields in the north of the site have been reclaimed for agriculture. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage throughout the site and burning of the high bog. There is also evidence of old burning in the northern part of the high bog. All these activities have resulted in the loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Ardagullion 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. The site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummocks and pools. 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.