

Site Name: Mount Hevey Bog SAC

Site Code: 002342

Mount Hevey Bog is situated approximately 4 km north-east of Kinnegad, in the townlands of Cloncrave, White Island, Aghamore, Kilwarden and Kilnagalliagh. The Meath-Westmeath County boundary runs through the centre of the bog. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The Dublin-Sligo railway runs through the northern part of the bog isolating two northern lobes. The northern lobes are adjacent to the Royal Canal.

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 site consists of a long, narrow bog separated into four sub-sections; the larger eastern section supports a wet quaking area with hummock/hollows and pool complex. Hummock/hollow complex also occurs in the south-west lobe and the north-west lobe of the site. An infilled lake is now a soak system. Forestry occurs on the most easterly section of the site. There is abandoned cutover bog all around the bog and particularly on the western section. There are some wet and actively regenerating areas of the cutover along the southern margins of the western lobe and along the railway.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of the Midlands Raised Bog type. The vegetation consists of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), cottongrasses (*Eriophorum angustifolium* and *E. vaginatum*), Bog Asphodel, White Beak-sedge and midland

indicator species Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) and the bog moss *Sphagnum magellanicum*. The wet quaking area in the eastern section of the bog has pools that support the bog moss *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, with White Beak-sedge, cottongrasses and Heather at the edges. The hummock/hollow complex supports a range of hummock-forming bog mosses, including *Sphagnum imbricatum* and *S. fuscum*, as well as other species such as *S. capillifolium*, *S. magellanicum* and *S. papillosum*. Other plants found in the hummock/hollow complexes are Bog-rosemary, Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Bog Asphodel and Deergass.

The infilled lake is wet and quaking and the vegetation is dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), along with the bog mosses *Sphagnum palustre* and *S. papillosum*. The Downy Birch trees appear to be between 20 and 30 years old, and the Bog-myrtle is over 150 cm high. The edge of the former lake is clearly marked by robust plants of Heather. Some areas of old abandoned cutover bog on the site are very wet and regenerating well, with a good cover of bog mosses, including species such as *S. cuspidatum*, *S. papillosum*, *S. capillifolium*, *S. auriculatum* and *S. subnitens*.

Current land use on the site consists of limited mechanised peat-cutting, mostly on the eastern end of the high bog. There are areas of old peat cuttings all around the site with some very old abandoned regenerating cutover along the edge of the railway. The area to the east of the site has been afforested. Areas of cutover have been reclaimed for agricultural purposes. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage throughout the site (both old and recent) and burning of the high 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.

Mount Hevey 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 hummock/hollow complexes, pools, flushes and regenerating cutover, as well as a number of scarce plant species. 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.