

**Site Name: Clooneen Bog SAC**

**Site Code: 002348**

Clooneen Bog lies approximately 3 km south-east of Roosky in Co. Longford on the east bank of the River Shannon, just north of Lough Forbes. It is located almost entirely in the townlands of Clooneen, Bunanass, Edercloon and Cloonart (North and South). The site comprises areas of high bog, including bog woodland and cutover bog, and is bounded by a mineral ridge to the east and agricultural fields to the north. Although it would have originally adjoined the River Shannon to the west and Lough Forbes to the south, it is now separated from these by a road and agricultural fields.

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):

[7120] Degraded Raised Bog [7150] Rhynchosporion Vegetation [91D0] Bog Woodland*
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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 consists of a narrow bog dome, with cutover bog to the north, south and west. An interesting feature is the extensive area of bog woodland growing on a flush in the northern section of the bog. There is also a large flush to the south-east associated with a marginal area which slopes relatively steeply towards an extensive region of old cutover. Wet grassland in this area floods from Lough Forbes.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of the Midland Raised Bog type, with Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and Deergrass all occurring abundantly. Other species present include Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), White Beak-sedge and Bog Asphodel. In the narrow central region of the high bog there are small pools containing the bog moss *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). Bog mosses are plentiful between these pools, with *S.*

*capillifolium*, *S. magellanicum* and *S. fuscum* noted. These pools are associated with a depression and become algal-filled tear pools towards the margins of the high bog.

The open bog woodland is dominated by lichen encrusted Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), with a field layer of Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) and ericaceous shrubs such as Heather, Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) and Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*). Mosses such as *Hylocomium splendens* and *Breutelia chrysocoma* are also abundant. Species such as *Sphagnum recurvum*, *S. imbricatum* and *S. palustre* are less common. There are also several ferns present including Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*) and Broad Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*). The flush to the south-east is dominated by Purple Moor-grass and may be associated with an area that has subsided. There are occasional clumps of Bog-myrtle, with some small Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) bushes encroaching. This latter species is an invasive, non-native species. Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) is associated with this flush, indicating some groundwater influence.

Old cutover to the north is dominated by Purple Moor-grass, with cottongrass, Heather and Carnation Sedge. There is some active regeneration in the north-east, with cottongrass dominating over bog moss (*S. cuspidatum*). Birch and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) scrub occurs on old cut-away to the west and east. An extensive area of cut-away to the south is dominated by Purple Moor-grass and Heather, with Bog-myrtle occurring abundantly in places. This area forms a mosaic with wet grassland and there is some flooding from Lough Forbes.

Current land use on the site consists of mechanised peat-cutting to the north-west and south-west of the high bog. Some areas of cutover have been reclaimed for agriculture to the south-east and there are small conifer plantations to the east. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage and burning. 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. The bog is generally *Sphagnum*-poor due to burning, but regeneration is taking place.

Clooneen Bog 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 this habitat type (over 60%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level. Bog woodland 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. The areas of degraded raised bog and Rhynchosporion are also of conservation importance, being habitats that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.