

Site Name: Curraghlahanagh Bog SAC

Site Code: 002350

Curraghlahanagh Bog is part of a bog cluster situated approximately 6 km north of Mountbellew in Co. Galway. It is mainly in the townlands of Curraghlahanagh, Rushestown and Milltown. The site comprises a raised bog with areas of high bog and cutover, and lies on a relatively low-lying plateau entirely within the upper reaches of the Shiven River. Mature coniferous forestry occurs on the high bog to the north of the site.

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 has a typical raised bog topography with a central dome which slopes gently towards the margins. The high bog supports an extensive quaking area with many pools. Hummocks and pools are confined to the top of the dome and the rest consists of pools separated by lawns of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). Two bog bursts and associated tear pools occur on the eastern side of the site. A number of flushes occur at the western edge of the high bog. Habitat diversity is increased with the presence of a narrow strip of old mixed woodland on the north-eastern margin of the bog. A number of bare erosion channels occur in association with the bog burst to the east of the site.

This is a typical example of Western Raised Bog and the vegetation consists of Carnation Sedge with Bog Asphodel hollows, and tussocks of Heather (*Calluna*

vulgaris), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) and Deergrass. Other species present include the mosses *Campylopus atrovirens*, *Racomitrium lanuginosum* and the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea*. Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) and Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) are locally abundant. The high bog supports an extensive quaking area with linear pools and lawns with bog moss (*Sphagnum cuspidatum*) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). Lawns of bog mosses, including *Sphagnum magellanicum* and *S. auriculatum*, occur between the pools. In general, hummock cover is low, with occasional large *Racomitrium lanuginosum* tussocks. Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia purpurea*) and Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) are found in association with flush areas to the west of the site along with scattered Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*). Flora associated with the main channel in the bog burst to the east includes Heather, Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*), Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Narrow Buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana* and some orchid species. The epiphytic lichen flora is diverse, with *Coelocaulon aculeatum*, and *Usnea* spp. occurring on Heather, and *Cladonia cervicornis* subsp. *verticillata* on the bark of birch trees. The small area of mixed woodland to the north-east supports Downy Birch, Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), oak (*Quercus* sp.) and Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*). In areas of abandoned cutover, Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), Purple Moor-grass and Downy Birch are common, with bog moss regeneration being notably good in the south and north-eastern cutover.

Red Grouse, a species that is becoming increasingly rare in Ireland, has been recorded on the site.

Current land use on the site consists of peat-cutting along the north and east margins. Afforestation has occurred on the high bog to the north-west of the site. Damaging activities associated with this land use include drainage and burning. Fire damage has been recorded in the 1980s but the present abundance of bog mosses indicates significant recovery of the bog surface in these areas. 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.

Curraghleanagh 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 and flushes, and regenerating cutover which add to the diversity and scientific value 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.