



Site Name: Monivea Bog SAC

Site Code: 002352

Monivea Bog is situated approximately 5 km north-east of Athenry, Co. Galway. It is located in the townlands of Corrantarmud, Newcastle, Glenaslat and Lenamor. To the east lies the Killaclogher River and to the north a large coniferous plantation. It is located in an area of karstic limestone.

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 consists of two higher areas to the north and south, with a central depression associated with an extensive flush system. The dome of the bog features a pool/hummock complex including wet, quaking areas. There is also a lake and swallow holes located in the north-west flush and soak system. Cutover bog is found all around the margins of the high bog and is extensive on the north and eastern margins. Tracks are found on the high bog to allow access for peat-cutting.

The high bog has vegetation typical of the Western Raised Bog type consisting of Carnation Sedge, Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bog Asphodel, Deergrass, the lichen *Cladonia portentosa* and the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum*. Overall, Deergrass dominates the drier part of the high bog. In the pool/hummock complex on quaking bog, the cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) reaches 75%, consisting mainly of lawns of *Sphagnum cuspidatum*. Elsewhere, *Sphagnum* cover is typically low, ranging from 5-20%. Some pools are algae-dominated, but healthier pools have Hare's-tail

Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) and the bog mosses *S. cuspidatum* and *S. auriculatum*. Hummocks consist of the bog mosses *S. fuscum*, *S. capillifolium* and *S. imbricatum*, with the mosses *Campylopus introflexus* and *Leucobryum glaucum*. Heather and lichens are also found on the hummocks. The bog features a large soak-system in the north-west which originates at the lake. The open water is colonised by Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) and Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*), associated with quaking bog moss lawns. To the south-east of the lake there is a pool surrounded by scraw (or floating) vegetation. This consists of a quaking mat of mosses (*Sphagnum cuspidatum*, *S. recurvum*, *S. palustre* and *Aulacomnium palustre*), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Bog-sedge (*Carex limosa*).

Swallow holes are vegetated by willows (*Salix* spp.), Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Broad Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) and Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*). A number of small flushes with Purple Moor-grass, Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) and bog mosses (*S. imbricatum*, *S. palustre* and *S. fuscum*) occur around the site. The cutover areas are sparsely vegetated in the north, east and south, and where vegetation occurs it is dominated by Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*). The tracks in and around the bog are lined mainly with Gorse (*Ulex europeaus*) and willows with some birch (*Betula* sp.) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). Gorse encroaches onto the high bog at the mid-west of the site.

There is extensive mechanical peat cutting to the north, east and south of the site, and some hand-cutting in the south-west. In places the peat facebank reaches 3 m in height, with associated cracking and slumping. Some of the high bog drains are new and others have been deepened. Burning events have occurred on the bog in the past and in places the peat remains unvegetated. 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.

Monivea 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 diversity of raised bog microhabitats including hummock/hollow complexes, pools, flushes, soak system and open water. 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 E.U. resource of this habitat type (over 60%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.