



Site Name: Ardgraigue Bog SAC

Site Code: 002356

Ardgraigue Bog is situated approximately 3 km north-east of Killimor, in Co. Galway, in the townlands of Ardgraigue, Kilquain, Woodfield, and Lissaniska North and South. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. It is surrounded by agricultural fields and is located within a cluster of raised bogs. The bog is just north of the Killimor-Eyreccourt road with a number of local access roads leading to the bog and one leading onto the high bog.

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 a small raised bog that developed in a basin. It is actively cut on all margins. It is described as being of excellent quality with a very wet quaking surface and soft margins. The vegetation is described as uniform throughout the bog. There are few pools on this site but it has very good hummock and hollow complexes. There is a small flush to the north of the high bog area. The bog does not appear to have been burnt in over 20 years and has a good lichen flora as a result.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a Midlands Raised Bog including Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) and the bog moss *Sphagnum magellanicum*. Other plants species found on the bog include Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), the sundews *Drosera anglica* and *D. rotundifolia*, Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*),

Deergrass, White Beak-sedge and Carnation Sedge. The bog has a luxuriant cover of bog mosses including *Sphagnum fuscum*, *S. papillosum*, *S. imbricatum*, *S. capillifolium*, *S. subnitens* and *S. tenellum*. This is a highly diverse range of species and these are found in hummocks and lawns. The site has very good hummock/hollow complexes with the bog mosses *Sphagnum pulchrum*, *S. cuspidatum* and *S. auriculatum* present. The bog supports a number of other moss species, including *Campylopus atrovirens*, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, *Aulacomnium palustre*, *Leucobryum glaucum* and *Pleurozium schreberi*, and the liverworts *Pleurozia purpurea*, *Calypogeia sphagnicola*, *Cladopodiella fluitans*, and *Odontoschisma sphagni*. Lichen growth on the bog is excellent with some large colonies, include species such as *Cladonia ciliata*, *C. arbuscula* and *C. uncialis*. A flush dominated by Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) and Heather, and surrounded by Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) is found to the north of the site. Other species occurring in this flush include Bog-rosemary, Cranberry, Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Common Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*) and the bog moss *Sphagnum recurvum*.

Current land use on the site consists of peat-cutting around most of the margins of the high bog. Areas of cutover have been reclaimed for agricultural purposes to the north of the site. Peat-cutting on the site appears to be domestic mechanised peat extraction. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage around the high bog 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.

Ardgraique 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 has a high diversity of raised bog plant species and supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummock/hollow complexes, pools, and flushes, 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.