

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: MOYCULLEN BOGS NHA

SITE CODE: 002364

Moycullen Bogs NHA is an extensive lowland blanket bog located 5 km west of Galway City in Co. Galway. To the west it is largely bounded by the Spiddle - Moycullen Road (some areas west and north-west of this road are, however, included), to the north and east by the Galway - Moycullen road and to the south by the Galway - Spiddle road. It has an altitude range of between 40 m and 143 m and is primarily underlain by granite bedrock. Several lakes and streams are contained in the site as well as large areas of wet and dry heath, fens and flushes and revegetating cutaway.

The main habitat on the site is blanket bog, usually dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). Other species present include Common Cotton-grass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Black-bog Rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Heath Milkwort (*Polygala serpyllifolia*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*) and Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*). Bog mosses present include *Sphagnum papillosum*, *S. imbricatum* and *S. capillifolium* with mosses *Hypnum cupressiforme*, *Racomitrium lanuginosum* and *Leucobryum glaucum* and the liverwort *Odontoschisma sphagnii*. The lichen *Cladonia portentosa* also occurs.

Extensive pool systems are found at Laughill. These are interspersed with lawns of White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*), Bog Asphodel, mosses (*Campylopus atrovirens* and *C. introflexus*), Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*) and hummocks of the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum*. Pool vegetation includes Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Bladderwort (*Utricularia* spp.), Oblong-leaved Sundew (*Drosera intermedia*), Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*), Round-leaved Sundew, Common Cotton-grass, and the bog moss *Sphagnum auriculatum*. A number of the pools have islands supporting Ling Heather, Purple Moor-grass, Deergrass, Cross-leaved Heath and bog mosses. Other species in pools elsewhere throughout the site include Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*) and the bog mosses *Sphagnum cuspidatum* and *S. recurvum*.

Flushed areas of bog are indicated by the dominance of Bog-myrtle, Purple Moor-grass, Tormentil, Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) and Black Bog-rush. Other species in the flushes include cottongrasses, Lousewort, Bogbean, Marsh St. John's-wort (*Hypericum eloides*), Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), Star Sedge (*Carex echinata*), Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*), Marsh Horsetail (*Equisetum palustre*) and Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*). The rare and protected Slender Cottongrass (*Eriophorum gracile*) is found within the site at Tonabrocky. A notable feature of this site is the extensive areas of flushed

blanket bog near Knock River dominated by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*).

There are two large lakes, Lough Inch and Lough Kip, within the site. Their shoreline vegetation is dominated by Purple Moor-grass and Bog-myrtle with varying amounts of Devil's-bit Scabious, Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*), Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Marsh Ragwort (*Senecio aquaticus*), Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Autumn Hawkbit (*Leontodon autumnalis*) and Royal Fern also present. Many smaller lakes are scattered throughout the site, often with quaking margins and extensive rafts of bog mosses and Oblong-leaved Sundew. Typical vegetation includes Common Reed, Bogbean, Bog-myrtle, Marsh St. John's-wort, Bottle Sedge, White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*), Tormentil, Heath Milkwort (*Polygala serpyllifolia*) and Marsh Violet (*Viola palustris*). Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) is also frequent and forms large stands at Loch an Amadain.

Other habitats present within the site include areas of wet heath, along the summits of low knolls, dominated by Deer-grass, Ling, Cross-leaved Heath, Purple Moor-grass, Bog Asphodel, cottongrasses and Lousewort. Areas of dry heath area found on rocky hillocks that outcrop from the surrounding blanket bog in and around the access road to Lough Kip. These are vegetated with Autumn Gorse (*Ulex gallii*) with frequent Ling, Cross-leaved Heath and occasional Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Tormentil, Purple Moor-grass and St. Dabeoc's Heath (*Daboecia cantabrica*). Additional species noted include Bog-myrtle, Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), hummocks with lichen *Cladonia portentosa*, Purple Moor-grass, Common Cotton-grass, Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*). Areas of dry heath often merge with Willow (*Salix* spp.) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) scrub. Drainage ditches are vegetated with bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.), Bogbean, Bog Pondweed, Water Horsetail, Devil's-bit Scabious, Sharp-flowered Rush, Round-leaved Sundew and Meadowsweet.

The site supports Irish Red Data Book species Red Grouse and several additional notable species of fauna including Irish Hare, Common Frog, Snipe, Curlew, Fox, Kestrel and Lapwing.

Peat cutting (both mechanical and hand) is the dominant land use at present, while grazing pressure by donkey, cattle and ponies is low but locally damaging. Sheep appear to be absent. There are a number of quarries within the site – notably at Derrycruih. A golf course has been constructed on the north side of Lough Inch and a small pitch and putt course has been established on the southern shores of the lake. There has been some burning of the bog surface in the recent past and conifer plantations have been planted in the centre and eastern area of the site. Due to the proximity of the site to Galway City there is increasing pressure from housing development (typically single dwellings). Development of wind energy installations is also a potential threat.

Moycullen Bogs NHA is an extensive area of lowland blanket bog in an area of high landscape beauty. The site supports a diversity of habitats including large areas of intact blanket bog, wet heath, dry heath, alkaline fen and revegetating cutaway. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource. It is largely confined to coastal regions with cool, wet, oceanic climates at temperate latitudes. North-west Europe

contains some of the best-developed areas of blanket bog in the world. Lowland blanket bog comprises less than 3% of the world's peatlands. In Europe this type of blanket bog is restricted to Ireland, Britain, Norway and Iceland. The lowland blanket bog that occurs in Ireland is considered to be an extreme hyperoceanic variant of the habitat type, found nowhere else in the world except on the coastal fringes of north-west Scotland.