

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: TRAFRASK BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 002371

Trafrask Bog NHA consists of lowland blanket bog occurring in association with heath and regenerating cutaway within an undulating area with rock outcrops. It is located beside the village of Trafrask and 4.5 km west of Adrigole, Co. Cork. The north-western side of the site is defined by scrub and wetland habitats bordering agricultural land and household gardens. The northern, south-eastern and western sides are defined by the edge of the blanket bog and heath. The south-eastern side is defined by a fence, while the south-western side is defined by the low water mark, to incorporate intertidal habitats of interest. The eastern side of the site has a semi-natural transition to dry heath primarily and exposed rock. The site occurs adjacent to the coast and rises from near sea level to 50 m. Bedrock geology consist of siltstone of the Old Red Sandstone formation.

Intact blanket bog vegetation comprises frequent Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), low Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*) and occasional tussocks of Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*). The moss cover is remarkably intact, wet and spongy with up to 80% bog moss cover (*Sphagnum capillifolium*, *S. papillosum* and *S. tenellum*). A number of deep, medium-sized pools contain White water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*) with Marsh St. John's-wort (*Hypericum elodes*) on pool margins. There are also smaller inter-connecting pool systems colonised by bog moss (*Sphagnum cuspidatum* and *S. auriculatum*), Sundews (*Drosera intermedia* and *D. anglica*) and White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*). There area also small flushes which support a range of species including Bulbous Sedge (*Juncus bulbosus*), Marsh Violet (*Viola palustre*), Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) and Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*). The habitat is only lightly grazed by cattle and sheep, contains few patches of bare peat and there is no evidence of recent burning.

The margins of the blanket bog tend to be drier than the interior and are transitional to dry heath. Dry heath is also common on rocky outcrops and ridges within the site and comprises tall Ling Heather with Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*) and Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*). Small patches of wet heath also occur where the peat becomes shallow over bedrock. In addition, the site also contains a good range of other habitats including cutover bog, shingle beach, intertidal mud and sandflats, saltmarsh, lowland dry grassland, scrub and bedrock shore.

Species recorded on the site include Irish Red Data Book species, Otter and Common Frog.

Grazing by sheep and cattle is the current main land use on the site. Hand cutting of peat occurred formerly on the site but has not been practiced for several generations. In adjacent areas, further afforestation, residential development and quarrying are potential threats to the integrity of the site.

Trafrask Bog NHA is of considerable conservation interest as it is an example of a relatively small but quite intact lowland blanket bog that occurs in close proximity to the sea and a range of other habitats. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource and 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.