

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: LOUGH ATORICK DISTRICT BOGS NHA**

**SITE CODE: 002377**

Lough Atorick District Bogs NHA is a cluster of seven, primarily upland, blanket bogs situated in the area around Lough Atorick in the Slieve Aughty Mountains, Co. Clare. The bogs are located in the townlands of Slievanore, Derryncaw and Drummin and are bounded by forestry plantations, agricultural lands and roads. These bogs have developed in deep basins, within a blanket bog landscape, and have vegetation characteristics intermediate between raised bog and blanket bog. Altitude range within the site is between 90 m and 213 m. Bedrock geology is Old Red Sandstone.

The sites consist of a series of raised domes of peat surrounded by fringes of regenerating cutover peat and regenerating peat banks. The site also contains reedbeds as well as quaking areas, hummock/hollow complexes and heath habitat. The blanket bog vegetation is dominated by Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), with abundant Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) and occasional Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). The hollows are dominated by White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*), with Bog Asphodel and Cross-leaved Heath. Characteristic raised bog species, such as Bog Rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) and Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), are frequent. Additional species found include Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and the characteristic blanket bog liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea*. Lichens *Cladonia portentosa* and *C. uncialis* are also present as hummocks. There are wefts of moss *Hypnum jutlandicum* growing prostrate over hummocks of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) occurs in stands throughout the site.

Irish Red Data Book species Red Grouse, a species that is becoming increasingly rare in Ireland, has been recorded on the site and Hen Harrier are known to use the site and hunt in the area.

Current landuse on the site consists of peat cutting, around the edge of the high bog, and forestry. Threats to the site include potential hydrological impacts from surrounding coniferous forestry. Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta*) is colonising the bog surface. Clay pigeon shooting occurs. Damaging activities associated with these land uses include drainage and disturbance of local populations of important species. These are activities that have resulted in habitat loss and damage to the hydrological condition of the site and pose a potential threat to its conservation.

Lough Atorick District Bogs NHA is a site of considerable conservation importance containing upland blanket bog with intermediary characteristics between blanket and raised bog types. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource. It is largely confined to coastal regions at temperate latitudes with cool, wet, oceanic climates. North-west Europe contains some of the best-developed areas of blanket bog in the

world. The most extensive areas are found in Ireland and Britain. Upland blanket bogs, due to their exposure to severe climatic conditions at high elevations, are particularly vulnerable to erosion by human activities and extensive areas are currently undergoing active erosion due mainly to overgrazing. The current area of intact upland blanket bog in Ireland represents only a fraction of the original resource, due to the combined impacts of afforestation and overgrazing, and intact examples are therefore extremely valuable for nature conservation. Their long-term survival requires sensitive management.