

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: MAUHERSLIEVE BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 002385

Mauherslieve Bog NHA is an upland blanket bog located on the south-eastern part of the Silvermine Mountains range approximately 17 km due south of Nenagh, Co. Tipperary. Altitude on the site rises from a low plateau at 376 m to the summit at 543 m. The site is situated within the townland of Coumnagillagh. Bedrock geology consists of sandstone glacial till.

The site is almost entirely surrounded by plantation forestry on its northern, western, and southern boundaries. In general, the eastern half of the site incorporates commonage land that still remains undamaged. The boundary on the north-east is delineated partly by a trackway. The remainder of the south-eastern boundary follows the margin of a commonage which runs adjacent to forestry land. While a river drains the forestry on the western side, there are no rivers or streams draining the actual slopes of the site.

The site features a good example of a sloping mountain blanket bog with a lower-lying plateau of blanket bog at the base of the eastern slopes. While some erosion has resulted from grazing animals on this plateau, most of the vegetation on the rest of the slopes is intact. The bog on the plateau has accumulated to a depth of over 1.5 m and an area of re-vegetated cutaway occurs here. Old drains cut across the base of the eastern slopes and for the most part, these are dry or have re-vegetated.

Ground cover on the plateau is generally good, with Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*E. vaginatum*). Also present are Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Milkwort (*Polygala serpyllifolia*) and tussocks of the Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*). Occasional small hummocks of the mosses *Leucobryum glaucum* and *Racomitrium lanuginosum* are also present. Occasional small hummocks of bog mosses also occur on the plateau, consisting of *Sphagnum capillifolium*, *S. papillosum* and *S. subnitens*. While there are no bog pools, small wet hollows occur with dried algal mats and bog mosses such as *Sphagnum cuspidatum* and *S. papillosum*.

The eastern slopes of the hill have a grassy appearance and feature a gradation in vegetation with increasing elevation. The lower slopes are dominated by Purple Moor-grass, Ling Heather, Cross-leaved Heath and Tormentil. Further upslope, the bog is dominated more by Ling Heather and cottongrasses (*Eriophorum* spp.). Close to the summit, characteristic mountain blanket bog exists, with carpets of Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), and Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*).

There are no rocky outcrops or saddles on the hill and the summit is relatively flat over a small area, with shallow peat and a rocky cairn marking the top (elevation 543

m). The loose stones of the cairn have been vegetated for the most part by plants such as Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Polypody (*Polypodium vulgare*), the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum* and occasional patches of Goldenrod (*Solidago virgaurea*). A dense band of Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*) (approximately 2-3 m wide), with occasional shrubs of willow (*Salix* sp.), encircles the cairn.

The Irish Red Data Book species, Irish Hare, occurs on the site.

Grazing by cattle and sheep is the primary land use on the site. However, this occurs only on the lower plateau on the eastern slopes. The rest of the slopes are relatively undisturbed, apart from occasional, narrow, animal paths that cross the sides of the mountain. On the lower slopes close to the south-eastern boundary where drainage is better, there is the potential for disturbance from agriculture in the form of reclamation and reseeded for pasture. A significant threat to the whole site is the possible expansion of plantation forestry which currently surrounds most of the site.

Mauherslieve Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation value featuring intact upland blanket bog. 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.