

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: CONIGAR BOG NHA**

**SITE CODE: 002386**

Conigar Bog NHA consists of an upland blanket bog and heath in the Shehy Mountains, located 2 km south-west of Gougane Barra in the townlands of Currakeal and Lackavane, Co. Kerry. It is situated on a plateau overlooking Gouganebarra Lake and Gouganebarra Forest Park and spans an altitude range of between 250 m and 566 m. It is bounded by townland boundaries and streams to the north, east and south-west, by roads and forestry tracks to the west and by field systems to the south-east. The site contains the summit of Conigar and six oligotrophic lakes including Lough Naman, Lough Fada and Lough Nabrade. Bedrock geology consists of Old Red Sandstone.

The blanket bog vegetation is overgrazed at present and is dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Deer Sedge (*Scirpus cespitosus*), with some Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) and Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). Purple Moor-grass is overgrowing the Ling Heather but is not forming dense tussocks. Overall bog moss (*Sphagnum* spp.) cover is patchy (0-30%), but where wet depressions occur, cover reaches 60% with *Sphagnum capillifolium*, *S. papillosum* and *S. subnitens*. Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) and Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) are also present. Large hummocks of the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum* occur in erosion channels.

The shallower peats on sloping ground are heavily grazed, with tussocks of Purple Moor-grass and Mat Grass (*Nardus stricta*) dominating. Rocky outcrops support Ling Heather and Purple Moor-grass on thin peat, with occasional Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*).

Lough Narca supports nutrient-poor plant communities typical of all the lakes within the site. It has large open areas of deep water and emergent vegetation in sheltered areas, consisting of Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Branched Bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*), Broad-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*) and Pipewort (*Eriocaulon aquaticum*).

The site supports the Irish Red Data Book species Red Grouse.

Landuse on the site consists of agriculture. Activities associated with agriculture include grazing by sheep and burning of vegetation. These activities have resulted in habitat loss and damage to the hydrological condition of the site.

Conigar Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance containing 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.