

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: CRAGNASHINGAUN BOGS NHA

SITE CODE: 002400

Cragnashingaun Bogs NHA consists of a relatively large area of lowland blanket bog located 2 km south of Doo Lough and 11 km south-east of Quilty village in the townlands of Cahermurphy, Glenmore, and Doolough in west Co. Clare. The site is situated on the lower slopes of Cragnashingaun Hill and surrounds Lough Nacrag. The summit of Cragnashingaun Hill consists of a mosaic of dry heath with occasional rocky outcrops. Intact lowland blanket bog occurs on the deeper peat lens adjacent to the river in the townland of Glenmore. The site is defined to the north west, north and north-east by forestry, to the south-east and south-west by cutaway bog and to the south by forestry and rushy fields. The site includes Lough Nacrag, a number of rivers and streams, areas of heath, cutaway bog and exposed rock. Altitude range on this site is from 110 m to 117 m. Bedrock geology is shale.

The slopes of Cragnashingaun Hill and surrounding Lough Nacrag are dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) with Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) with occasional Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and the lichens *Cladonia portentosa* and *C. ciliata*. Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) are present on the wetter areas. Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) and the bog mosses (*Sphagnum papillosum* and *S. capillifolium*) are all common while the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum* is occasional.

On the lower slopes are occasional infilled wet areas with Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) and the Bog Moss (*Sphagnum capillifolium*). An abundance of Bog Asphodel and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*) is found on wetter areas, while the moss *Campylopus introflexus* is found on the banks of old cutaway. The margins of Lough Nacrag are characterised by quaking mats of bog moss with marginal vegetation of Cottongrasses and Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*). Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and Water Lily (*Nymphaea alba*) occur in the lake. Remains of dried-out, shallow pools are present in the northern portion of the site and the bog surface is wet and quaking with abundant lichen cover (*Cladonia portentosa*). The banks of old cutaway areas below Cragnashingaun Hill are vegetated with Hard fern (*Blechnum spicant*), Ling Heather, cottongrasses and Purple Moor-grass with occasional lichen (*Cladonia floerkeana*), Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Tormentil and Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*).

The lowland blanket bog at Glenmore is dominated by Ling Heather, Cottongrasses and Purple Moor-grass with occasional Bog Asphodel and Deergrass in hollows. There are frequent large hummocks of bog mosses (*Sphagnum papillosum* and *S. subnitens*) and the surface is wet and quaking. Lichens (*Cladonia uncialis* and *C. portentosa*) occur. The margins of this deep, wet bog have been burnt but are still

very wet and dominated by bog moss, cottongrasses and Purple Moor-grass.

Hen Harrier nest nearby and use this site for hunting. Red Grouse and Common Frog are recorded. These are Irish Red Data Book species. Sand Martin use the peat banks of Lough Nacrag for nesting.

Landuse of machine and hand cutting of peat threaten both sites, as does drainage. Conifer plantations surround both sites. Afforestation has significantly reduced blanket bog habitat in Co. Clare and its presence in the vicinity increases the potential for further habitat loss through the invasion of non-native seedlings and through possible hydrological impacts. There have been recent applications for wind power installation on both areas of bog and in surrounding areas. The blanket bog at Glenmore has been burnt in the recent past. Grazing pressure (mainly horses /donkeys) appears low. There is also some dumping of rubbish within the site.

Cragnashingaun Bogs NHA is of considerable conservation value as it is a good example of both upland and lowland blanket bog in an area of the country where bog habitat is scarce. The site supports a diversity of flora and fauna within a range of blanket bog microhabitats. 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. The most extensive areas are found in Ireland, Britain and Iceland. 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.