

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: CUNNAGHER MORE BOG NHA**

**SITE CODE: 002420**

Cunnagher More Bog NHA consists primarily of lowland blanket bog and is located 9 km north of Castlebar, Co. Mayo. It is situated in the townlands of Cunnagher North, Crillaun, Gort and Dereens. Loughnambrackkeagh forms part of the site boundary in the north while forestry plantations form most of the boundary on the southern and western sides. The site lies at an altitude of approximately 60 m and is predominantly flat or gently sloping with a few low hills throughout the area. Bedrock geology consists of Old Red Sandstone.

The site is mainly dominated by blanket bog habitat that locally forms a mosaic with heath, re-vegetating cutover and species-rich, wet grassland. An area of bog at the center of the site shows features intermediate between raised and blanket bog.

The blanket bog is locally quaking with up to 70% bog moss cover. Dominant species occurring are Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) and lichens *Cladonia portentosa* and *C. uncialis*. Where grazing pressure is low, Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) up to 50cm in height, is present. An uncommon bog moss species, *Sphagnum fuscum*, has been recorded on the wetter, intact areas.

Bog pools occur in the center of the site, to the south of a trackway that bisects the site from east to west. Dominant species occurring on pool margins are Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) and Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*). Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) and the scarce species, Oblong-leaved Sundew (*D. intermedia*) are also present, together with bog mosses *S. magellanicum* and *S. recurvum*. Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*) and bog moss *S. auriculatum* occur in the pools. Quaking, flushed areas with a good cover of bog mosses occur adjacent to the bog pools. Species recorded in these areas include Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*), Marsh St. John's-wort (*Hypericum elodes*) and Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*).

Potential threats to the bog include a proposed gas pipeline that would cut through the south-western section of the bog. There is grazing pressures by cattle and horses especially on the western part of the site where peat reaches 30% exposure in places. Poaching by grazing stock is also evident. Other land uses on the site include peat-cutting and forestry. These activities have resulted in loss and alteration of habitat and may pose a threat to the conservation of the site.

Cunnagher More Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance. It contains an intact area of lowland blanket bog with a diverse range of habitat features including pools and a species-rich flora. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce

resource. It 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.