

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: LOUGH ACROW BOGS NHA**

**SITE CODE: 002421**

Lough Acrow Bogs NHA is an upland blanket bog located on the Loop Head peninsula, about 3 km north-east of Liscasey Village in Co. Clare. It is situated within the townlands of Liscasey, Furroor, Dehomad, Letteragh, and Boolynagleragh. It can be accessed from a number of local roads through the townland of Dehomad and via forestry tracks at Boolyneaska/Letteragh and Boolynagleragh. A further track provides access to Lough Acrow. The altitude range on this site is between 160 m and 237 m and the bedrock geology is shale.

The site is dominated by blanket bog located on plateau areas (at Letteragh, Liscasey, Dehomad and Furroor) above a gently sloping valley. Blanket bog also occurs on the slopes and valley floor. On areas of higher ground (along ridge summits of Dehomad and Liscasey) the blanket bog merges with wet heath. Abandoned, regenerating cutover is found along the margins of the site at Letteragh, Liscasey and Boolynagleragh.

Plateau areas with deep peat are dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) with scattered Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and frequent Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and Heath Milkwort (*Polygala serpyllifolia*). Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and bog mosses (*Sphagnum capillifolium*, *S. papillosum*, *S. auriculatum* and *S. subnitens*) are all frequent. Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) and White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) are found in areas with standing water. Hummocks increase in abundance towards the eastern end of the site approaching a lake and a pool complex.

Blanket bog on sloping ground is dominated by Purple Moor-grass, cottongrasses, Bog Asphodel, Cross-leaved Heath, Tormentil, Ling Heather, Deergrass and occasional Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), Heath Milkwort, Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) and White Beak-sedge. The lichens *Cladonia uncialis* and *C. portentosa* occur occasionally.

At the eastern end of the site there is an extensive area of interconnecting pools with quaking inter-pool areas dominated by bog mosses (*Sphagnum cuspidatum*, *S. auriculatum* and *S. papillosum*) and cottongrasses, while Bog Asphodel and White Beak-sedge are found along pool margins. Hummocks are dominated by the bog mosses *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. subnitens*, with low Ling Heather, Round-leaved Sundew and occasional Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*), the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea*, the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum* and the lichen *Cladonia uncialis* are occasional. At the centre of the pool complex there is a lake with wet quaking margins vegetated by Bogbean and

Water Lily. Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) is found along the lake margins and occurs on hummocks with the scarce bog moss *Sphagnum fuscum* on peat greater than 2 - 3 m deep.

A small, well-vegetated lake is found further west of this in Dehomad townland. Emergent vegetation within this lake is dominated by Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), cottongrasses and Bogbean. Lough Acrow is more poorly vegetated with Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*) with the margins dominated by Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), the moss *Polytrichum commune* and Devil's-bit Scabious. Flushed areas are support Purple Moor-grass, Bog Asphodel, Devil's-bit Scabious, Heath Rush and mosses (*Mylia* spp. and *Rhytidiadelphus loreus*) and bog mosses (*Sphagnum capillifolium*, *S. auriculatum* and *S. subnitens*).

Golden Plover, Hen Harrier, Irish Hare, Otter and Common Frog (all Irish Red Data Book species) occur on the site. Breeding Red Grouse (an Irish Red Data Book Species), Teal, Common Sandpiper, Redshank, Raven and Curlew are also recorded within the site. Green Hairstreak Butterfly has also been observed on the site.

Burning, drainage, grazing, afforestation and peat cutting threaten the integrity of this site. Water is abstracted from Lough Acrow and a number of wind energy developments are proposed for the area. The construction of access roads and turbine foundations associated with such developments causes habitat loss and disturbance and can also de-stabilize peat and lead to erosion.

Lough Acrow Bogs NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance. It consists of an extensive upland blanket bog in a county where this habitat is both rare and becoming increasingly fragmented through afforestation. The site features a good diversity of microhabitats including a deep, wet bog associated with a well-developed pool complex. The site provides both feeding and breeding habitat for a number of threatened species including Red Grouse, Hen Harrier, Golden Plover, Irish Hare and Otter. 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.