

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: FORREW BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 002432

Forrew Bog NHA is a lowland blanket bog located approximately 6 km north-west of Crossmolina, County Mayo. It is situated within the townlands of Forrew and Knockananny on the eastern edge of the extensive plains of lowland blanket bog that characterise this region of north-west Mayo. The site is bounded by bog tracks and active turbary and occurs at an altitude of between 60 m and 75 m. The underlying geology is composed of Carboniferous Limestone.

The site is a good example of a lowland blanket bog. It includes areas of intact bog with interconnecting pool systems and areas of revegetated cutover, flushes and small stands of scrub. Drainage within the bog is into the low-lying Lough Cuagh, located in the centre of the site. This lake drains southwards by a stream that subsequently enters the Owenmore River.

In the intact blanket bog areas there are good examples of interconnecting pool complexes with wet lawns, hummocks and hollows. The vegetation is characteristic of a lowland blanket bog, consisting of Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) and Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*). Short Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) also occurs, with occasional Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and hummocks of the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum*. Mats of the characteristic blanket bog liverwort, *Pleurozia purpurea*, are common. A high cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) reflects the wet nature of the bog. Well-formed moss hummocks are abundant, consisting of *Sphagnum capillifolium*, *S. papillosum* and *S. subnitens*. Occasional hummocks of the locally rare bog moss, *Sphagnum fuscum*, also occur. Within the numerous pools *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, *S. auriculatum* and *S. papillosum* are common, with frequent plants of Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) and mats of Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*) occur around the pool edges.

Cutover bog areas contain old drains, peat banks and revegetated flats. The vegetation between the drains is dominated by Deergrass, Bog Asphodel and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*). The cutover flats are much wetter and have revegetated with carpets of bog mosses, mats of the lichen *Cladonia portentosa*, scattered tussocks of Deergrass and Hare's-tail Cottongrass.

The site supports Irish Hare, a Red Data Book species, and birds such as Snipe and Meadow Pipit.

Landuse on the site includes dumping and peat cutting. Occasional dumping of old cars and farm machinery occurs along bog trackways and against old peat banks that

are dispersed across the bog surface. Evidence of recent peat extraction using the 'sausage machine' is also seen, although the extent of this is small at present. Recent hand cutting of peat is also evident along some of the peat banks. Expansion of local commercial forestry plantations poses a potential threat to the site. There is little evidence to suggest that animal grazing or burning currently affect the site to any great degree.

Forrew Bog NHA is a good example of a lowland blanket bog supporting areas of intact bog with interconnecting pool systems, flushes and areas of revegetated cutover. 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.