SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: EDERGLEN BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 002446

Ederglen Bog NHA contains upland and lowland blanket bog and is located 10 km to the east of Belmullet and 5 km west of Bangor Erris, in Co. Mayo. The site is located within the townlands of Ederglen, Dereens and Rathmorgan, and its boundaries are mainly townland boundaries, in some cases marked by fences, roads and tracks. The site takes in the peaks and lowlands between Ederglen and Knocknascallop and includes an altitude range of between 10 m and 239 m. The area is underlain primarily by a bedrock of Schist and Gneiss with a band of quartzite running east-west at the south of the site.

The two hills within the site encompass five peaks on which blanket bog is found throughout with peat depth generally 1 - 2 m and with good bog moss and heather cover. There is a well-developed pool system on the western section of the site. Headwater streams, on the eastern slopes of the hills, flow into Carrowmore Lake. A stream flows through the south-western part of the site and joins the Munkin River south-east of the site. Blanket bog forms mosaics with heath on the hill slopes.

Blanket bog vegetation is characterised by the presence of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*). Mosses present include *Sphagnum* species and *Pleurozium schreberi*; other lower plants here include *Cladonia portentosa* and *C. uncialis* (lichens) and the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea.*

On the lower slopes at Ederglen, the vegetation is short and is dominated by Purple Moor-grass and Deergrass with some Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*). Also present are tussocks of Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) with some Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and occasional hummocks of moss (*Racomitrium lanuginosum*). Further up the slope, on a plateau/hollow area, moss cover increases. Bog Moss (*Sphagnum capillifolium*) and other mosses occur with the lichen *Cladonia uncialis*. Bog mosses have colonised some wet hollows in this area. On the adjacent ridge there is complete vegetation cover although it is low in stature. Species present include Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Ling Heather, Cross-leaved Heath, Purple Moor-grass, Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*).

There are many pools in the western part of the site and the entire area is wet and quaking with a good covering (up to 80 %) of mosses: *Racomitrium lanuginosum* and *Sphagnum capillifolium* form occasional hummocks, while *Camplyopus atrovirens* occurs in quaking areas. Bog islands in the pools have large hummocks with an abundance of Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) occurring around the edges. Stands of Common Cottongrass occur in wet areas while Black Bog-rush is abundant over the plateau areas. Other species present include Hare's-tail Cottongrass,

Deergrass, Bog Asphodel, Cross-leaved Heath, bog mosses (*Sphagnum cuspidatum* and *S. auriculatum*), the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea* and lichens (*Cladonia portentosa* and *C. uncialis*) with Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) in pools.

At Ederglen there is a basin flush colonised by plant species including Common Cottongrass, Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*), Bog Moss (*Sphagnum cuspidatum*) and some Ling Heather. There are a few flushes on the western slopes of Knocknascallop. On higher slopes at Ederglen ground cover is a mosaic of wet heath, dry heath and blanket bog with low hummocks. Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) and Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*) occur with taller Ling Heather than that which occurs on the lower slopes. The moss species *Pleurozium schreberi* occurs in an area of heath around the peak.

Current landuse on the site consists of grazing by sheep on the upper slopes. This has caused peat erosion especially around the peaks at Ederglen. The low vegetation and lack of lower plant cover on the slopes at Ederglen indicate burning in recent years, however these areas are now beginning to re-vegetate. There is also a small area of very recent machine peat-cutting adjacent to the western boundary at Ederglen. Extensive peat-cutting to the south of the site boundary may have an affect on the hydrology of the area. An anemometer has been erected on the upper slopes in Ederglen townland and there is a proposal to develop a windfarm on the site.

Ederglen Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation importance. It supports excellent upland and lowland blanket bog with quaking areas and pool systems. 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. 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.