

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: MOUNT EAGLE BOGS NHA

SITE CODE: 002449

Mount Eagle Bogs NHA consists of four areas of blanket bog adjacent to Mount Eagle, 9 km east of Castleisland on the Kerry/Cork county boundary. The site is situated in the townlands of Cordal East, Coom, Glanowen, Knockauncurragh, Cappaphaudeen and Glenlahan. It includes the summits of Croaghane (Mount Eagle), Knockfeha and Knockanefune. Forestry plantations adjoin all four areas with the remaining site boundaries marked by roads, streams and active turbary. The site ranges in altitude between 210 m and 451 m. Bedrock geology consists of coal measures.

The most western area of bog, at Cordal East, consists of a large expanse of intact bog on a plateau. There is a distinct dome present and features intermediate between raised bog and blanket bog are evident. The vegetation is characterised by Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), which although quite short still dominate the vegetation. Other species present include Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*) and Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) with occasional Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) and Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*). Bog mosses (*Sphagnum subnitens* and *S. capillifolium*) hummocks have 40% cover. Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*) is quite common with occasional Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*). White Beaked-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) occurs in hollows with Bog Asphodel. The moss *Campylopus introflexus* and the lichen *Cladonia portentosa* are also present. There are some dried out hummocks of moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum*, but overall the site is quite wet and in places quaking. The vegetation has a low growth form, which may be related to exposure as it appears to be little grazed.

The summit of Mount Eagle supports a small intact blanket bog on deep peat. The bog slopes steeply to the west, but neither bare peat nor erosion channels are present. The blanket bog is quite uniform with no pools or flushes and the vegetation is dominated by Ling Heather and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia careulea*) with Hare's-tail Cottongrass, Cross-leaved Heath, Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and hummocks and lawns of bog mosses (*Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. papillosum*). Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Bog Asphodel and the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum* are also present. This area is surrounded by forestry and appears ungrazed; mature Ling Heather bushes occur, overgrowing the moss *Hypnum jutlandicum*.

At Glanowen on the summit of Knockfeha there is a plateau blanket bog dominated by Purple Moor-grass, Crossed-leaved Heath, Hare's-tail Cottongrass and Ling Heather on peat over 1 m deep. Bog moss cover is good (up to 50% in places) with *Sphagnum capillifolium* and some large hummocks (30 cm) of *S. subnitens*. There are natural drainage channels vegetated with Deergrass and cottongrasses with no

evidence of peat erosion. Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) occurs occasionally. Despite drainage the bog is still very wet here with extensive bog moss cover and large hummocks. Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) occurs on fence-banks. Towards the summit *Racomitrium lanuginosum* becomes more common along with Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) and Ling Heather which reaches 15 cm in height. Bog moss cover reaches 50-80% with *Sphagnum tenellum*, *S. subnitens* and *S. capillifolium*. Some hummocks are 30 cm high and over 1 m wide.

The most easterly area is a long stretch of bog along a narrow ridge, bordered by forestry on the slopes. The bog is dominated by Purple Moor-grass with Ling Heather and Crossed-leaved Heath. Bog Asphodel, Deergrass and Hare's-tail Cottongrass are also present. Bog moss cover is good at 30%. There has been some damage due to drainage in preparation for forestry, but this area remains unplanted and may have been too exposed to plant. The presence of a wind gauge here indicates the potential for windfarm development is being investigated.

Mount Eagle is part of an extensive upland complex that extends from the Stacks Mountains in Kerry to the Mullaghareirk Mountains in Cork and Limerick. This upland complex supports extensive areas of blanket bog, much of which has been afforested in recent years. The upland complex is an important stronghold for the Hen Harrier population in Ireland. Red Grouse and Irish Hare also occur on the site. All three species are listed in the Red Data Book.

Landuses on the site include forestry, peat-cutting and agriculture. Activities associated with these landuses include sheep grazing, burning and drainage. There are numerous quad tracks and a wind gauge present on the site. Extensive forestry plantations adjoin the site and all these activities have resulted in habitat loss and damage to the hydrological condition of the site.

Mount Eagle Bogs NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance consisting of upland blanket bog. 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. The site also supports important populations of three Red Data Book species – Hen Harrier, Red Grouse and Irish Hare.