

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: BALLYGAR BOG NHA**

**SITE CODE: 000229**

Ballygar Bog NHA is situated approximately 1 km north-west of Ballygar village, in the townlands of Hermitage and Ballygar, Co. Galway. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The northern and western margins of the site are bounded by commercial conifer plantation.

The site consists of a small relatively intact bog. Hummocks/hollows and pools are found on the site with algal filled tear pools. Three small flushes are also found on the site. There is forestry on the north-eastern high bog and mixed woodland occurs on the cutover along the northern margin. Cutover bog occurs on the southern margins of the high bog.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a raised bog, consisting of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), White beaked-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*), Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea* and Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*). Bog mosses are frequent on the site and include (*Sphagnum capillifolium*, *S. magellanicum* and *S. papillosum*). Hummocks/hollows and pools are found on the bog. The hummocks are colonised by bog mosses including *S. fuscum*, *S. imbricatum*; the pools and hollows are colonised by the bogs mosses *Sphagnum papillosum* and *S. capillifolium* with *S. cuspidatum* the aquatic bog moss in the wettest areas. Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*) is also found in the hollows.

There are three flushes on the bog which support Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Bog-rosemary, Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccus*), Ling Heather, Carnation Sedge and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). Mosses present in the flushes include *Sphagnum imbricatum*, *S. subnitens*, *S. auriculatum*, *Pleurozium schreberi*, *Pseudoscleropodium purum* and *Leucobryum glaucum*. Stunted Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) are found in two of the flushes.

Much of the cutover on this bog is afforested; along the northern and eastern margins there is a thin band of mixed woodland dominated by Downy Birch and Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*). There is a good diversity of lichens present because the site has not been burnt in the recent past, in some locations the lichens are suppressing the bog mosses.

Current landuse on the site consists of peat-cutting on the south-eastern corner. Forestry is found on the north-east corner of the high bog and along the northern margin of the site. Unlike many other bogs, Ballygar does not appear to have been burnt in over ten years. Areas of cutover have been reclaimed for agricultural

purposes. Forestry and agricultural reclamation result in drainage of the site, which leads to habitat loss and damage to the bog's hydrological status, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Ballygar Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance comprising as it does a raised bog, a rare habitat in the E.U. and one that is becoming increasingly scarce and under threat in Ireland. This site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummock/hollow complexes, pools, flushes and woodlands, as well as a number of scarce plant species. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of raised bog (over 50%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.

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