

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LEAHA BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 000292

Leaha Bog NHA is located 9.5 km east-south-east of Glenamaddy mainly in the townlands Clooncullaun and Leaha in County Galway. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The site is bounded in the south and south-west by a tributary of the Shiven River and in the north of the site by a road.

The site is part of a large bog complex that is now separated by roads and cutover that has been reclaimed for agriculture. Leaha Bog is separated from Funshin Bog NHA (267) by a road, and a tributary of the Shiven River separates Leaha Bog from Camderry Bog NHA (240) and Clooncullaun Bog NHA (245). Leaha Bog has a shallow dome with low hummocks throughout the bog; the site does have pools but they are colonised by algae. In the south-west of the site there is coniferous forestry on the high bog. Cutover is found all around the site.

This bog has been classified as a Western Raised Bog, and supports such species as Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), cottongrasses (*Eriophorum* spp.), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea*. Carnation Sedge and Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) are particularly dominant. Low hummocks of the bog mosses *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. imbricatum* occur on the site as well as, but less frequently, *S. fuscum*, *S. subnitens*, *S. tenellum* and *S. magellanicum*. There are occasional large hummocks of the moss *Leucobryum glaucum* and these are colonised, among other species, by the moss *Campylopus introflexus* and the lichens *Cladonia crispata*, *C. portentosa* and *C. floerkeana*. The only pools are of a poor quality and are colonised by algae; they are mainly found in the north-west of the site and the south-west near the forestry. Although the aquatic bog moss *S. cuspidatum* does not dominate in the pools it has been recorded on the bog. The short stature of the Ling Heather and the presence of only algal pools provide some evidence of burning on the bog in the past. Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) formerly grew in a wet area in the south-west of the bog but this section of the high bog has now been planted with coniferous forestry. The cutover in the west of the site is dominated by coniferous forestry and in the east of the site it is primarily reclaimed grassland. Species recorded on the peaty wet grassland include Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) and Green-ribbed Sedge (*Carex binervis*).

Current landuses on the site include forestry, active peat cutting and agriculture. There is forestry on the high bog in the south-west of the site and on the cutover along the western edge of the site. Active peat-cutting is most prevalent along the track in the south-west of the site and all around the northern section of the high bog. Along the eastern edge of the site the cutover has been reclaimed for agricultural grassland.

Damaging activities associated with these landuses include drainage throughout the site and extensive burning of the high bog. These activities have all resulted in the loss of habitat, damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Leaha 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. The site supports a good diversity of raised bog microhabitats, including hummocks. 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.