

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: KNOCKROE BOG NHA**

**SITE CODE: 000366**

Knockroe Bog NHA contains a fairly extensive area of deep, lowland blanket bog and is located 13 km east of the town of Caherciveen, 4 km north of Deriana Lough and 19 km south-west of the Macgillycuddy's Reeks in the townland of Knockroe, Co. Kerry. It is situated on a valley-side of the Owroe River, below Coomacarrea Mountain, at between 60 m and 120 m altitude. It adjoins upland to the north and south-west, where its boundaries are defined by rivers, streams and drainage ditches. Land to the north and south-east is predominantly low-lying agricultural land. The underlying bedrock is Old Red Sandstone.

Several types of blanket bog vegetation occur within the site. Of particular interest are the systems of interconnecting pools, known as tension or tear pools, which are aligned perpendicular to the direction of slope. These areas are wet and quaking and support a good cover of bog mosses. The hummocks consist of the mosses *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *Racomitrium lanuginosum*, Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*). There is also a good cover of *Cladonia* lichens, an indication that these areas have not incurred recent burning. The flatter, wetter areas between the hummocks support the growth of other bog mosses, such as *Sphagnum imbricatum*, *S. papillosum* and *S. auriculatum*. Bog pools are colonised by Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Lesser Bladderwort (*Utricularia minor*) and Oblong-leaved Sundew (*Drosera intermedia*), the latter a species of rather local occurrence. Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) dominate between the pools.

Other types of blanket bog vegetation present include drier areas of Purple Moor-grass, with much White Beak-sedge and Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), and areas dominated by Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Purple Moor-grass and Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*). One section of the bog, which has been drained and fenced, is considerably drier than the undrained areas but is nonetheless spongy. Its species composition is similar to that of the rest of the bog, but with a higher proportion of Purple Moor-grass and lower proportion of Deergrass. Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) is common in this area and the Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) is locally dominant.

Red Grouse, a Red Data Book species, occurs in the site.

The main landuse within the site is sheep grazing. Burning of vegetation has occurred in places and a section of the bog has been damaged by the installation of drainage ditches. A new access track has also been constructed within the northern boundary. Further drainage and development, particularly that of afforestation, pose a threat to the site. A reduction in grazing pressure is required if the ecological interest of the site is to be maintained.

Knockroe Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance. It is a good example of a relatively extensive lowland blanket bog, with a diversity of habitat features, including a bog pool system. This site is particularly important as a representative of this habitat type because it is located near the southern limit of blanket bog distribution in the northern hemisphere. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource and 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 lowland 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.

8.12.2003