

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: MONAINCHA BOG/BALLAGHMORE BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 000652

Monaincha Bog/Ballaghmore Bog NHA is situated about 6 km east of Roscrea in the townlands of Monaincha, Co. Tipperary, and Ballaghmore and Kilmartin, Co. Laois. The site comprises a large raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutaway. The site margins are bounded by agricultural land apart from in the south where commercial forestry occurs. The site lies directly north of the Nore Valley Bogs NHA (1853).

The high bog consists of a large dome with two lobes separated by forestry, a small lake and cutover. The site supports a series of small lakes, Butlers Lough, Black Lough and Forked Lough. Commercial afforestation occupies much of the adjacent areas of cutover. An area of mixed woodland occurs to the north. A strip of old deciduous woodland occurs along the southwestern boundary.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of the true Midland Raised Bog type, consisting of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), cottongrass (*Eriophorum* spp.) and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*). Other species present include Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) and Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*). In places, on the southern lobe Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) are locally dominant. The northern lobe is relatively intact, and there are very wet areas between a cluster of Scot's Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) in the central area and Butlers Lough. The remainder of the bog supports a well-developed hummock/hollow system. Drainage has occurred on the southern lobe and there are few hummocks or hollows and *Sphagnum* growth is poor. The undrained southern section is slightly quaking and there is good bog moss cover, with *Sphagnum magellanicum*, *S. cuspidatum* and *S. imbricatum* forming wet spongy lawns. A soak with Scot's Pine and young Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) occurs on this southern lobe. The vegetation is characteristic of soaks, with lawns of *Sphagnum magellanicum*, carpeted with Cranberry and Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) and locally frequent White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*). The terrain is wet and quaking. There is also hummock vegetation covered by the mosses *Pleurozium schreberi* and *Dicranium scoparium*, and tall Ling Heather.

Old cutover surrounding much of the dome is dominated by commercial forestry. Two large reclaimed fields are present on cutover to the north-east. Some Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Downy Birch scrub has encroached upon abandoned cutover towards the centre of the site. Pockets of birch woodland have developed in places. Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) also occurs on cutover along with some marsh/poor fen vegetation and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia purpurea*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*).

Current landuse on the site consists of peat-cutting along much of the margins of the southern lobe. Afforestation has occurred on cutaway particularly in the central area. Areas of old cutaway to the north-east have been reclaimed for agricultural purposes. Damaging activities associated with these landuses include drainage and burning. Fire damage has been recorded in the 1980s and there is evidence of more recent burning on the high bog. These are all activities that have resulted in loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability.

Monaincha Bog/Ballaghmore 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 hummock/hollow complexes, and a large soak system. 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.