

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: BALLYNAGRENIA AND BALLINDERRY BOG NHA**

**SITE CODE: 000674**

Ballynagrenia and Ballinderry Bog NHA is located 2 km north-east of Moate, mostly in the townlands Ballinderry and Ballynagrenia, Co. Westmeath. The site comprises two raised bogs that include both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The site is bounded on the west by the road between Moate and Moyvoughly and on the south by the road between Moate and Rosemount.

The site consists of two high bog domes, which once formed part of a much larger bog complex. The larger Ballynagrenia Bog is now separated from Ballinderry Bog to the south by an esker ridge and cutover. The centre of both bogs is wet and with hummocks and pools. There is a large flush in a depression to the north of Ballynagrenia Bog. Cutover bog occurs all around the margins of the high bog.

The two high bogs mostly have vegetation typical of the Midland Raised Bog type, consisting of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*). Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) is recorded on both bogs, although in Ballynagrenia it occurs only in the centre of the site where it has been recorded with the lichens *Cladonia portentosa*, *C. floerkeana* and *C. pyxidata*, and the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum*. The centre of both high bogs is generally wet and spongy with a good cover of the bog mosses *Sphagnum capillifolium*, *S. papillosum*, *S. imbricatum*, *S. fuscum* and *S. magellanicum*. Pools in these central areas contain the bog moss *S. cuspidatum*. The hollows at the centre of Ballynagrenia Bog contain Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and the bog moss *S. cuspidatum*. The pools here also contain Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). There is an old drain running across the centre of Ballynagrenia which contains the bog moss *S. cuspidatum* and is in-filling from the sides with Hare's-tail Cottongrass and Bog Asphodel. At the eastern end the drain connects with long tear pools, some of which contain Great Sundew and the bog moss *S. cuspidatum*. However, some of these tear pools are filled with algae and seem to be drying out. The main flush on Ballnagrenia is dominated by Ling Heather with patches of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*). A second small flush to the south of this is dominated by Ling Heather and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). There are some small flushes in the north of Ballinderry bog with Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) and the bog mosses *S. magellanicum* and *S. cuspidatum*.

The old cutover to the west and east of Ballynagrenia is dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) scrub and is being colonised by Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*). On the west of Ballinderry the cutover has also been colonised by Downy Birch. The esker ridge between the bogs supports semi-natural wet grassland and is bordered by sections of old cutover.

Hares have been recorded on the site, as have Snipe and Meadow Pipets.

Around the margins of the site, peat-cutting is evident with active peat-cutting to the north-west and east of Ballynagrenia and the south and east of Ballinderry. There has been some reclamation of cutover to the west of the site for grazing. To the north of Ballynagrenia there has been agricultural reclamation of Downy Birch scrub on old cutover. To the east of Ballinderry extensive areas of old cutover have been reclaimed for agricultural grassland. Damaging activities associated with these landuses include drainage throughout the site (both old and recent) and extensive burning of the high bog. Both high bogs have been extensively burnt in recent times. These are all activities that have resulted in the loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a continuing threat to its viability. There is also some dumping along tracks on the cutover to the west and east of the site.

Ballynagrenia and Ballinderry Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance comprising as it does two raised bogs, 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 and flushes. 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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