

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: AUGHHRIM BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 001227

Aughrim Bog NHA is located 4 km north-west of Ballygar mainly in the townlands Monasternallea (Abbeygrey), Knockaunrainy and Aghrane (Castlekelly) in Co. Galway. The site is 2 km west of the River Suck. The site comprises a raised bog that includes both areas of high bog and cutover bog. The site is bounded in parts by coniferous forestry to the south and north of the site.

The site is partially divided by old tracks and associated drains that run across the high bog. There is an area of hummocks and pools in the middle and west of the high bog and a section at the centre of this area is wet and quaking with a flush present. In the north-west of the site there is a small area of coniferous forestry on high bog. Cutover is found on the north of the site and around the south-west lobe; in the south of the site the cutover has been utilised for forestry.

Much of the high bog has vegetation typical of a Western Raised Bog, consisting of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), the mosses *Racomitrium lanuginosum* and *Campylopus atrovirens* and the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea*. The lichen *Cladonia portentosa* is often found in hummocks with Ling Heather. The bog mosses *Sphagnum papillosum* and *S. capillifolium* are common between pools with some *S. imbricatum* also recorded. To the west of the centre of the site there are many tear pools containing the bog moss *S. cuspidatum* and with Common Cottongrass (*E. angustifolium*) and White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) found around the edges. Some pools contain the bog moss *S. auriculatum* and Brown Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora fusca*). There are also some small hummocks of the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum* and the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea* found amongst the pools and the moss *Campylopus atrovirens* is growing on an island in one of the larger pools. On the margins of the central pools complex carpets of the bog mosses *S. magellanicum* and *S. tenellum* and occasional patches of *S. fuscum* have been noted. The flush in the centre of the site is dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and occasional Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*). There is a thin cutover margin in the west with Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) woodland. In the north the cutover is dominated by Purple Moor-grass, Ling Heather and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*).

Current landuses on the site include forestry that is found on the high bog in the north-east of the site and on cutover in the south and east of the site. There is active peat-cutting in the north and north-west of the site. Damaging activities associated with these landuses include drainage throughout the site and burning of the high bog, although there has been no recent burning here. There are old drains along the tracks in the centre of the site that will have a damaging effect. All these activities have resulted in the loss of habitat, damage to the hydrological status of the site, and pose a

continuing threat to its viability. There is also some dumping occurring at the start of the bog track.

Aughrim 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 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.

14.11.2002