

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: ESKERBOY BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 001264

Eskerboy Bog NHA is situated approximately 4 km north-west of Killimor, Co. Galway, mainly in the townlands of Eskerboy, Gortknappagh and Lurgan More. The site comprises a long, narrow raised bog with areas of high bog and cutover, which lies between two esker ridges.

The site has a typical raised bog topography with a small, low domed area in the bog centre, with infilling pools. Three flushes occur, one along the southern margin of the high bog the other two towards the central area. Habitat diversity is increased with the presence of Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) scrub, in association with the central flush. Narrow bands of abandoned cutover occur along the southern and northern bog margins.

This is a typical example of the Western/Midland Raised Bog Type, with vegetation consisting of Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Hare's-Tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*). Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*) has been recorded from the site. The central area of the high bog has pools infilling with Hare's-Tail Cottongrass and there is a good cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum magellanicum*, *S. capillifolium*, *S. auriculatum* and *S. fuscum*). Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) are found in association with the two small flush areas to the south and centre of the site. The larger flush to the centre of the high bog supports a small grove of scattered Downy Birch. Abandoned cutover areas are dominated by Gorse to the north, with abundant Purple Moor-grass in the southern cutover margins.

Current landuse on the site comprises peat-cutting on the eastern and western sides. There has been very limited peat-cutting to the north and south, where a narrow band of cutover separates the high bog from adjoining esker ridges. To the south-east and north-east the cutaway has been reclaimed for agriculture. Damaging activities associated with this landuse include drainage and burning. Drainage has led to drying out of the bog surface; however, no recent drains are evident on the site. Fire damage was recorded in the 1980s and 1990s – this has led to an abundance of Bog Asphodel. However, the presence of bog mosses and regenerating Ling Heather indicates recovery of the bog surface in some areas. 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.

Eskerboy 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 diversity of raised bog microhabitats including pools and flushes; the presence of Birch scrub adds to the

diversity and scientific value of the site. Ireland has a high proportion of the total E.U. resource of this habitat type (over 50%) and so has a special responsibility for its conservation at an international level.

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