

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LOUGH NAMINNA BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 002367

Lough Naminna Bog NHA is an area of upland blanket bog located approximately 6 km north-west of the village of Lissycasey in west Co. Clare. The site is situated within the townlands of Carncreagh, Booleynea and Booltiagh and lies at an altitude of 170 m to 210 m. Bedrock geology consists of Carboniferous Limestone.

The site is a good example of an upland blanket bog. While much of the area surrounding the site has been planted with commercial forestry, areas of intact bog remain around Lough Naminna. Areas of re-vegetated cutover, wet heath and dry heath also occur. A small area of flat bog lies close to the lake-shore. The land rises gently eastwards and southwards from the lake, forming low hills which give way to a slightly higher altitude bog. North and west of the lake, the land rises steadily to the higher plateau.

The flatter, low-lying ground close to the lakeshore is densely vegetated and has a grassy appearance. Peat depth is approximately 1.5 m and the area may represent very old peat cutting that has revegetated. Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Deergrass (*Scirpus caespitosus*) dominate with short Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*) occupying 25 % of ground cover. Also present are Milkwort (*Polygala serpyllifolia*), Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) and Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*). Bog mosses are common and include *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. subnitens* with some *S. papillosum*. Close to the base of the rocky hillocks where drainage is slightly enriched, Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) is common.

The upper bog plateau is more intact with better hummock and hollow development than that on the lower flats by the lakeshore. The ground is wetter with a reduced cover of Ling Heather. Bog moss cover is mostly restricted to hummocks, with well-developed hummocks of *Sphagnum capillifolium* being common over the entire plateau area. While there are no bog pools, locally wet areas occur with carpets of *Sphagnum papillosum*. Hummocks of two other mosses, *Racomitrium lanuginosum* and *Leucobryum glaucum* are also frequent. Also occurring are Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and patches of the lichen, *Cladonia uncialis*.

The low hillocks on the eastern side of Lough Naminna are covered in a shallow peat. Rock outcrops are frequent and give rise to dry heath habitat. This vegetation is dominated by short Ling Heather and Bell Heather with tussocks of Deergrass, Purple Moor-grass and Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*). Occasional low shrubs of Gorse (*Ulex* sp.) also occur.

Lough Naminna is known to be a good trout fishery. The Irish Red Data Book species Otter is known to frequent the waters. Hen Harrier, also an Irish Red Data Book species, is also known to hunt over the site.

Evidence of land use on the site includes old peat cutting that has regenerated well. A small area of eroding bog occurs along the northern border of the site. This area has peat hags. A potential threat is the expansion of plantation forestry onto the remaining area of intact bog around Lough Naminna.

Lough Naminna Bog NHA is of considerable conservation interest as it is a good example of an upland blanket bog. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource. It is largely confined to coastal regions at temperate latitudes with cool, wet, oceanic climates. North-west Europe contains some of the best-developed areas of blanket bog in the world. The most extensive areas are found in Ireland and Britain. Upland blanket bogs, due to their exposure to severe climatic conditions at high elevations, are particularly vulnerable to erosion by human activities and extensive areas are currently undergoing active erosion due mainly to overgrazing. The current area of intact upland blanket bog in Ireland represents only a fraction of the original resource, due to the combined impacts of afforestation and overgrazing, and intact examples are therefore extremely valuable for nature conservation. Their long-term survival requires sensitive management.

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