

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: CLOON AND LAGHTANABBA BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 002374

Cloon and Laghtanabba Bog NHA is a lowland blanket bog situated approximately 8 km north-west of Clifden and 3 km south-east of Cleggan in Connemara, Co. Galway. Most of the site is located within the townlands of Laghtanabba and Maw but a part lies within Cushatrough and Caen townlands. The north-eastern margin of the site is bounded by the Clifden-Cleggan road, the western margins by a stream and fence-line, the eastern margin by a stream while the southern boundary follows a section of a townland boundary. The site covers a narrow altitude range of between 57 m and 61 m. Bedrock geology in this area consists of schist and gneiss.

The site consists of an extensive plain of intact lowland blanket bog on deep peat with pool systems, quaking scraw, lawns of White Beaked-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) and hummock-hollow complexes. The blanket bog area is bounded on the south-west by low hills covered with heath and acid grassland vegetation. Other habitats occurring are streams and lakes, flushes, cutover bog and rock outcrops. There is a system of concentric pools in the western part of the site that is bounded by the foothills of Barnahallia Hill to the north-west.

Much of the bog has a well-developed hummock-hollow system. The vegetation is characterised by tussocks of Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) and lawns of White Beak-sedge. Small hummocks of the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum* occur throughout the site. The bog surface is quaking in parts and species found in such areas include Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), White Beak-sedge, Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*), the liverwort *Pleurozia purpurea* and the mosses *Campylopus atrovirens*, *C. introflexus* and *C. paradoxus*. Pale Butterwort (*Pinguicula lusitanica*), a locally occurring species is also found on the site. In the very wet quaking scraw areas, there is almost complete cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) with some Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*).

There are areas of regenerating bog vegetation on cutover blanket peat towards the north of the site where pools and wet hollows are colonised by bog mosses. Other species on the regenerating cutover include Ling Heather, Common Cottongrass, Hare's-tail Cottongrass, White Beak-sedge, Black Bog-rush, Purple Moor-grass, Cross-leaved Heath, Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), Round-leaved Sundew and mosses *Hypnum jutlandicum* and *Dicranum scoparium*. On very wet parts of the regenerating cutover the vegetation is dominated by Black Bog-rush, with Cross-leaved Heath, Bog-myrtle and Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*). Lichens (*Cladonia* spp.) occur over the entire site.

Pool systems are found in the south-eastern and north-western parts of the site. The pools support a rich cover of bog mosses. The bog surface here is a quaking scraw or floating mat of vegetation. Species noted include Black Bog-rush, Bogbean, Oblong-leaved Sundew (*Drosera intermedia*), White Beak-sedge, Bog Asphodel, Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*) and the lichen *Cladonia portentosa*. A mat of algae (*Zygonium* agg.) occurs in the pools.

The headwater of a stream rises within the site. The vegetation reflects an up welling of water and species noted here include Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Black Bog-rush, Bog-myrtle, Purple Moor-grass, Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*) and Cross-leaved Heath. The wetter and open water areas support Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*), bog moss *Sphagnum auriculatum* and Bladderwort (*Utricularia* spp.). A lake situated along the eastern boundary of the site is colonised by White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*) and Bogbean, with Royal Fern growing on its margins. An extensive flush is found in the centre-west of the site. This flush has open surface water and a quaking scraw of vegetation. The peat is very deep and species noted include Common Reed, Bogbean, Bog-myrtle, Black Bog-Rush, Cross-leaved Heath, Purple Moor-grass, Bog Asphodel and Bog Pondweed.

On the low hills and rock outcrops, vegetation consists of heath and is characterised by Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*), Ling Heather and Purple Moor-Grass. Although these low hills support a more heath-type vegetation, Black Bog-rush and Bog Asphodel still occur.

Red Grouse and Irish Hare, both Red Data Book species, are recorded on the site.

Current landuse on the site consists of peat cutting and grazing by sheep, cattle and ponies.

Cloon and Laghtanabba Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance consisting of lowland blanket and supporting a good diversity of blanket bog microhabitats, including hummock-hollow complexes, aligned pools systems, flushes, stream headwaters and regenerating cutover. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource. It is largely confined to coastal regions with cool, wet, oceanic climates at temperate latitudes. North-west Europe contains some of the best-developed areas of blanket bog in the world. Lowland blanket bog comprises less than 3% of the world's peatlands. In Europe this type of blanket bog is restricted to Ireland, Britain, Norway and Iceland. The lowland blanket bog that occurs in Ireland is considered to be an extreme hyperoceanic variant of the habitat type, found nowhere else in the world except on the coastal fringes of north-west Scotland.