

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: SLIEVENAMON BOG NHA**

**SITE CODE: 002388**

Slievenamon Bog NHA consists primarily of upland blanket bog and is located approximately 10 km north-west of Carrick-on-suir, Co. Tipperary. The site is situated within fifteen different townland areas, including Ballyknockane, Ballypatrick, Brenormore, Tober, Killusty North, Killavally, and Killurney. The mountain ranges in altitude from 300 m to 721 m and it stands as an isolated feature, surrounded by the low-lying landscape of South Tipperary. Granites and sandstones form the underlying geology.

The site is bordered on much of its northern and its southern side by forestry plantation, where obvious trackways separate the bog site from the plantations. Along the eastern and western side, farmland forms the boundaries. Streams on the eastern side drain into the Lingaun River that joins the River Suir in Carrick-on-Suir. Streams on the northern and western slopes drain into the Anner River that joins the River Suir outside Clonmel.

The site contains a good example of a mountain blanket bog. It contains a mosaic of vegetation types, including mountain blanket bog, headwater bogs, wet saddle bogs, dry heath, wet heath, flushes, acid grassland and vegetated, river gorges. Peat is shallow over much of the mountain's slopes but deeper peat has accumulated at the base of slopes and at the headwaters of the streams that drain the mountain. Rocky outcrops occur on the summits of Carrignagun and Carrickabrock.

At the base of the slopes and at the headwaters of the rivers where deep peat has accumulated the vegetation consists of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) and Deergrass (*Scirpus caespitosus*). Additional species include Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Heath Milkwort (*Polygala serpyllifolia*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*). The moss *Campylopus atrovirens* is also found in these areas. Dense carpets of bog mosses are common, with *Sphagnum capillifolium*, *S. papillosum*, and *S. subnitens* occurring as low hummocks in wetter areas and *Sphagnum recurvum* occurring in flushed areas. Moss species, *Polytrichum commune*, is also common. In general, bog pools are not common on the site, but on the saddle area between Carricagun and Carrickabrock, water has accumulated between outcropping rocks.

Wet heath is more common on the northern sides of the mountain. Ling Heather grows up to 60 cm tall and in association with Deergrass, Cross-leaved Heath and Tormentil. Sedges include Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*), Star Sedge (*C. echinata*), and Green-ribbed Sedge (*C. binervis*) while grasses Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) and Mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*) also occur.

On the southern slopes of Slievenamon, a drier heath vegetation has developed with characteristic species including short, Ling Heather, Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Wavy Hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*).

A deep, river gorge cuts through the slopes on the southern side of the mountain, adding further habitat diversity to the site. The steep, clay sides of the gorge support an open woodland and heath-type vegetation, with Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Ling Heather, Bilberry, Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), willows (*Salix* sp.), oaks (*Quercus* spp.), birches (*Betula* spp.) and Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*). The trees have an extensive cover of lichens, indicating a pollution-free environment, and there is a rich carpet of mosses and liverworts beneath the trees.

The site hosts a range of bird species including Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Raven, and Kestrel. A range of butterfly and moth species also occur including the Oak Eggar, Yellow Underwing, Small White, Common Blue, Peacock, Red Admiral, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and a species of Fritillary. The Irish Red Data Book species, Common Frog, also occurs here.

Most of the site shows evidence of disturbance from burning and grazing. Damage on the generally drier southern slopes has resulted from heavy grazing pressure and burning, with evidence of both old and recent fire events. Both activities result in erosion of the peat structure and a change in bog vegetation to more open, acid grassland. In addition, a roadway was recently excavated on the southern slopes, with the expectation of installing wind turbines. While this plan was rejected at the time, the road is now a popular amenity with hill walkers, posing the possible threat of further degradation to the slopes. Also, as commercial plantations border much of the site, a potential threat is the possible expansion of forestry.

Slievenamon Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance. It contains a good example of upland blanket bog. The site is reasonably diverse in terms of species and communities due to local variation. 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.