

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: GORTACULLIN BOG NHA**

**SITE CODE: 002401**

Gortacullin Bog NHA contains a mosaic of upland blanket bog and wet heath and is located approximately 4 km south-west of Broadford, and approximately 9 km north-east of Sixmilebridge, in Co. Clare. It lies almost entirely within the townlands of Hurdleston and Gortacullin and includes the summit of Knockaunnamoughill or Seefin Mountain. The northern margins of the site are bounded by enclosed agricultural land and the southern and eastern margins are bounded by commercial forestry plantation. Altitude range within the site is between 182 m and 273 m. Bedrock geology consists of Old Red Sandstone.

Blanket bog is confined to the lower slopes of the centre and eastern part of the site with wet heath occupying the drier areas on slightly higher ground. There is a large flush in the north part of the site and regenerating cutover bog with scrub woodland occurs in the south-centre.

Much of the of the blanket bog vegetation consists of Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*). Bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) are present throughout the site and in the wetter areas are present as carpets. In the flushes, carpets of bog moss *S. recurvum* occur with Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) and the Common and Hare's-tail Cottongrasses. Wet heath habitat is found on the better drained slopes and is characterized by a higher cover of Ling Heather with Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Heath Milkwort (*Polygala serpyllifolia*), Heath Wood-rush (*Luzula multiflora*), Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and Carnation Sedge. Old cutover is mainly dominated by Ling Heather. Birch (*Betula* sp.) and Willows (*Salix* spp.) also occur along drains in the centre of this cutover area.

Red Grouse, an Irish Red Data Book species that is becoming increasingly rare in Ireland, has been recorded on the site.

Current landuse on the site consists of grazing. Burning has occurred in the past.

Gortacullin Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance containing upland blanket bog and wet heath. The site supports a good diversity of blanket bog microhabitats, including hummock/hollow complexes, flushes and regenerating cutover with willow and birch scrub. 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, Britain and Iceland. 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.