

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: WOODCOCK HILL BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 002402

Woodcock Hill Bog NHA is an area of upland blanket bog and heath situated approximately 8 km north-west of Limerick City and 5 km south-east of Sixmilebridge in Co. Clare. It lies within the townlands of Bunnabinnia South, Woodcock Hill, Reaskcamoge and Derry More. The northern, eastern and western margins of the site are bounded by plantation forestry fringed by firebreaks. A road forms part of the northern boundary, a stream forms part of the western boundary while the southern boundary consists of hedgerows bordering agricultural land and commercial forestry. The site covers an altitude range of between 151 m and 306 m. Bedrock geology consists of Old Red Sandstone.

The site contains the rounded summit of Woodcock Hill and its south-western and south-eastern slopes. The mid-slopes of the hill feature a mosaic of upland blanket bog while the summit is covered by wet heath. Wet heath is dominated by Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). Other species occurring here include Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*E. vaginatum*) and Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*). Bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) occur locally but rarely dominate. Lichens (*Cladonia* spp.) occur throughout the site. Hummocks of the moss *Racomitrium lanuginosum* occur on the summit.

The lower slopes in the south-west support blanket bog. The vegetation here is characterised by extensive, spongy carpets of bog mosses including *Sphagnum cuspidatum* in wet hollows. There are also hollows dominated by Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*). Other species recorded include Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), Cross-leaved Heath, Purple-Moor Grass, Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) and Hare's-tail Cottongrass. Wet runnels and abundant surface water feature on this part of the site.

Current landuse consists of grazing which is most concentrated around the summit of Woodcock Hill.

Woodcock Hill Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance comprising upland blanket bog and wet heath. 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.