

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: CAMOWEN RIVER BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 002405

Camowen River Bog NHA is an upland blanket bog extending from Crockbrack Mountain, in the east, to the Camowen River, in the west. It lies approximately 10 km to the north-east of Buncrana on the Inishowen peninsula in Co. Donegal. The site is bounded by mature forestry plantation on its southern and eastern sides and on its northern side by a minor road. The site occurs between altitudes 150 m and 240 m. Bedrock geology consists of quartzite, limestone, slates and grits.

Characteristic blanket bog species include Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) and Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*). Characteristic mosses present include *Polytrichum commune* and *Campylopus introflexus*.

Bog moss cover is between sixty and eighty percent over the whole site, either in flushes (*S. recurvum*), hollows (*S. cuspidatum*, *S. papillosum*) or in lawns and hummocks (*S. capillifolium*, *S. subnitens*). Lichens on the bog surface include *Cladonia portentosa* and *C. uncialis*.

There are patches of wet heath at intervals throughout the site with a species composition that includes Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Deergrass and the mosses *Polytrichum commune*, *Hypnum jutlandicum* and hummocks of *Leucobryum glaucum*. Fungi are abundant throughout the site including *Hygrocybe* spp., *Entoloma* sp. and *Omphalina* sp.

The flora of the corridor of the naturally nutrient-rich stream on the eastern part of the site, at the base of the slopes of Crockbrack, includes Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*), Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*), Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*) and the liverwort *Pellia neesiana*. Part of the stream has been deepened to improve drainage. Drainage ditches across the site have colonised with Soft Rush, Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and the bog moss *Sphagnum auriculatum*.

There are wide flushed areas draining southwards to the Camowen River. The flora of these flushes includes Bulbous Rush, Purple Moor-grass, Bog Asphodel, Velvet Bent (*Agrostis canina*) and the mosses *Polytrichum commune*, *Hylocomium splendens*,

Rhytidiadelphus loreus, *S. papillosum* and *S. cuspidatum*. These give way to stands of Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*) and Soft Rush.

In general, the blanket bog resource has decreased in this area of Co. Donegal, due mainly to extensive afforestation. Apart from very localised damage, namely the deepening of a stream channel, this site is intact, with low grazing pressure and no evidence of peat cutting.

Camowen River Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance. It contains an extensive area of largely intact upland blanket bog supporting a good diversity of blanket bog microhabitats, including bog moss hummock/hollow complexes and flushes. The site is located on peat of at least 2 m deep and is very wet throughout resulting in an extensive bog moss cover. Streams and wet heath add to the conservation value of the site. 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.