

## SITE SYNOPSIS

**SITE NAME: KNOCKATARRIV/KNOCKARIDDERA BOGS NHA**

**SITE CODE: 002448**

Knockatarriv/Knockariddera Bogs NHA consists of upland blanket bog and is located 12 km east of Tralee and 7 km north of Castleisland, Co. Kerry. The site includes two areas of blanket bog, 2 km apart. The western site lies within the townlands of Knockatarriv, Tooreen and Tooreenastooka and the eastern site lies in the townlands of Knockariddera and Muingvautia. The western bog is bounded by forestry to the north and south, turbary to the west and a local road to the east. The eastern bog is bounded by fenced-off heath to the south, turbary to the west and north, forestry to the north-east and a local road to the east. Altitude range within the sites is between 220 m and 310 m. Bedrock geology consists of coal measures.

At Knockatarriv, blanket bog occurs on a saddle area between two hills on peat over 2 m deep. The vegetation consists of Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) with Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), Crossed-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Deergrass (*Scirpus caespitosus*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) and lichen *Cladonia portentosa*. The bog becomes wetter away from margins and the ground is soft and wet with 50% bog moss cover of *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. subnitens*. Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and Carnation Sedge are present in wet hollows with bog mosses *Sphagnum cuspidatum* and *S. papillosum* (80% cover) and Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*). There is peat-cutting and forestry at the margins and the adjacent bog is drying out with Deergrass becoming common and hummocks of moss (*Racomitrium lanuginosum*) occurring. Purple Moor-grass and Bog Asphodel dominate a flat area which was impacted by fire. The slope to the road is dominated by Deergrass with Purple Moor-grass and Bog Asphodel.

At Knockariddera there is blanket bog on either side of a channelled stream. On the northern slopes the vegetation is dominated by Purple Moor-grass and Bog Asphodel with occasional Hare's-tail Cottongrass, Deergrass and Tormentil. Fire has affected the area. Crossed-leaved Heath and Ling Heather are also occasional and scattered bog moss hummocks of *Sphagnum subnitens* and *S. capillifolium* with *S. papillosum* occur. Across a deep drain with standing water, an unburnt, flushed area occurs with bog moss cover to 20% and abundant Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*). There is a higher cover of Ling Heather and Crossed-leaved Heath here with occasional Bog Asphodel and Deergrass. Ling Heather height is approximately 15 cm and the bog surface is wet with occasional Purple Moor-grass and Tormentil. Bog moss hummocks are more frequent and larger (50cm wide). There are occasional White Beaked-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) flats between hummocks. Lichen cover is very low indicating past burning. Occasional Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) occurs beside a deep boundary drain to the north.

To the south of the stream Ling Heather dominates on the lower slopes with Bog Asphodel, Crossed-leaved Heath and Deergrass. Purple Moor-grass is less common here than on northern stream-bank. The terrain is soft with occasional bog moss (*Sphagnum subnitens*) hummocks. On flushed slopes Cranberry is common and Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) is present. Hare's-tail Cottongrass is also common. The blanket bog grades into heath on the upper slopes by the boundary fence. A Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) bush occurs on the bog surface. Further east Ling Heather and Hare's-tail Cottongrass dominate with Tormentil and Deergrass.

The site supports the Irish Red Data Book species Hen Harrier and Red Grouse.

Landuses on the site include peat-cutting and agriculture. Activities associated with these landuses include, drainage, burning and overgrazing by sheep. There is also evidence of grazing and poaching by cattle and forestry occurs on the bog margins. All these activities have resulted in the loss of habitat and damage to the hydrological status of the site.

Knockatarriv/Knockariddera Bogs NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance consisting of upland blanket bog. 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. This site also supports populations of two Red Data Book species - Hen Harrier and Red Grouse.