

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LOUGH GAY BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 002454

Lough Gay Bog NHA is an upland blanket bog located 6 km west of Broadford in the townland of Glenduff, Co. Limerick. The site occurs on peat of over 2 m in depth and includes both areas of intact bog and cutover areas adjacent to Lough Gay. It is bounded by forestry to the south, east and west, and by a track to the north. The altitude range of the site is between 300 m and 350 m and bedrock geology consists of coal measures.

The vegetation consists of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Hare's-tail cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) and Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) with Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and lichens (*Cladonia* spp.). There is a good cover of heather up to 25 cm high, as little domestic grazing occurs. The substrate is soft and wet underfoot with 50% cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. subnitens*). Lough Gay is a deep oligotrophic lake and is fringed with Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*). Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) occurs on flushed areas beside the lake. Old peat-cuttings are re-vegetating as turbarry use declines and there are extensive old heather banks.

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

Landuse on the site is limited to small-scale, domestic peat-cutting to the north of the intact blanket bog. No grazing or burning occurs and with little turf-cutting activity the conservation potential of this site is high. Forestry is the main landuse adjacent to the site and there is some colonisation of the bog surface by conifer seedlings from adjoining forestry plantations.

Lough Gay Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation value containing 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. The site also supports the protected species Hen Harrier.

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