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|------------------------|---|
| Scientific name | <i>Ulex gallii</i> – <i>Erica cinerea</i> heath |
| Common name | Western Gorse – Bell Heather heath |
| Community code | HE2A |

Vegetation

Spiny, dark green patches of *Ulex gallii* dominate this heathland community, accompanied by bushes of *Calluna vulgaris* and *Erica cinerea*. Amongst these are usually found trailing stems of *Potentilla erecta* and often a few tufts of *Molinia caerulea*. *Carex binervis* and *Carex panicea* are frequent. The bryophyte layer mainly consists of *Hypnum jutlandicum*. Other species are only occasional, with grasses such as *Agrostis canina/vinealis*, *Agrostis capillaris*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and *Danthonia decumbens* coming through where grazing has broken up the dwarf shrub layer.

Ecology

This heath community occurs predominantly on the lower slopes of hills and mountains and along coastal cliff-tops (mean altitude = 138 m, $n = 44$). Soils are acidic, relatively well-draining and of low fertility.

Sub-communities

Two sub-communities have been described. The *Daboecia cantabrica* – *Hypochaeris radicata* sub-community (HE2Ai) is predominantly a regional variety from mid-west Ireland from peat-free soils, occasionally with some basic influence. The *Hypnum jutlandicum* – *Hylocomium splendens* sub-community (HE2Aii) is the more widespread, typical assemblage.

Similar communities

This is a distinctive assemblage, since in no other community is *Ulex gallii* as frequent as it is here.

Records and distribution

Number of records (all)

| | |
|-------------------|----|
| Clearly assigned: | 91 |
| Transitional: | 5 |
| Total: | 96 |

Number of records (mapped)

| | |
|------------|----|
| 2001-2015: | 20 |
| 1986-2000: | 53 |
| 1971-1985: | 5 |
| Pre-1971: | 13 |
| Total: | 91 |

Number of hectads (most recent records)

| | |
|------------|----|
| 2001-2015: | 13 |
| 1986-2000: | 7 |
| 1971-1985: | 1 |
| Pre-1971: | 5 |
| Total: | 26 |

Number of hectads (all mapped records)

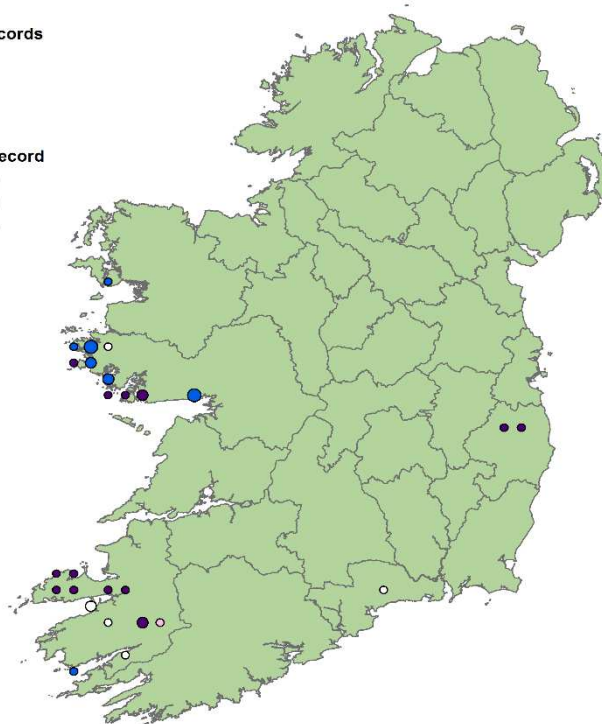
| | |
|------------|----|
| 2001-2015: | 13 |
| 1986-2000: | 8 |
| 1971-1985: | 2 |
| Pre-1971: | 6 |

Number of records

- 1-3
- 4-10
- 11-25
- 26+

Most recent record

- 2001-2015
- 1986-2000
- 1971-1985
- pre-1971



Synoptic table (n = 79)

| Species | Frequency (from I-V) | Cover min (med) max | Species | Frequency (from I-V) | Cover min (med) max |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--|-------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Ulex gallii</i> | V | 3-(8)-9 | <i>Cladonia portentosa</i> | II | +-(2)-7 |
| <i>Erica cinerea</i> | V | 2-(5)-9 | <i>Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus</i> | I | +-(2)-7 |
| <i>Potentilla erecta</i> | V | +-(3)-7 | <i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i> | I | 1-(2)-3 |
| <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> | V | 1-(5)-8 | <i>Trichophorum cesp./germanicum</i> | I | 1-(2)-5 |
| <i>Molinia caerulea</i> | IV | 2-(5)-8 | <i>Carex flacca</i> | I | 2-(3)-3 |
| <i>Hypnum jutlandicum</i> | III | +-(3)-8 | <i>Thuidium tamariscinum</i> | I | +-(3)-3 |
| <i>Carex binervis</i> | III | +-(3)-5 | <i>Carex pilulifera</i> | I | +-(1)-3 |
| <i>Carex panicea</i> | III | 1-(2)-7 | <i>Viola riviniana/reichenbachiana</i> | I | +-(3)-5 |
| <i>Agrostis canina/vinealis</i> | II | 1-(3)-5 | <i>Pleurozium schreberi</i> | I | +-(3)-8 |
| <i>Scleropodium purum</i> | II | +-(3)-5 | <i>Hypericum pulchrum</i> | I | 2-(2)-3 |
| <i>Daboecia cantabrica</i> | II | 1-(5)-7 | <i>Frullania tamarisci</i> | I | 1-(3)-5 |
| <i>Agrostis capillaris</i> | II | 2-(3)-5 | <i>Nardus stricta</i> | I | 1-(3)-5 |
| <i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i> | II | 1-(3)-5 | <i>Galium saxatile</i> | I | 1-(2)-4 |
| <i>Erica tetralix</i> | II | 1-(3)-5 | <i>Plantago lanceolata</i> | I | 1-(2)-3 |
| <i>Hylocomium splendens</i> | II | 1-(3)-5 | <i>Festuca rubra</i> | I | 2-(3)-5 |
| <i>Dicranum scoparium</i> | II | +-(2)-3 | <i>Hypnum cupressiforme</i> | I | 2-(3)-3 |
| <i>Succisa pratensis</i> | II | 1-(2)-5 | <i>Thymus polytrichus</i> | I | 2-(2)-5 |
| <i>Hypochaeris radicata</i> | II | 1-(2)-3 | <i>Lotus corniculatus</i> | I | 2-(2)-3 |
| <i>Polygala serpyllifolia</i> | II | +-(2)-3 | <i>Holcus lanatus</i> | I | 1-(2)-3 |
| <i>Danthonia decumbens</i> | II | 1-(2)-7 | <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> | I | 1-(2)-3 |

Affinities

GHI: HH1 Dry siliceous heath / HH3 Wet heath

ZM: ULI-01B Ulicion Malcuit 1929 / ULI-01C Daboecion cantabricae (Dupont ex Rivas-Mart. 1979) Rivas-Mart. *et al.* in Loidi *et al.* 1997

EUNIS: F4.231 Maritime gorse heaths / F4.232 Hiberno-Brittanica *Calluna vulgaris* – *Ulex gallii* heaths

NVC: H4a *Ulex gallii* – *Agrostis curtisii* heath *Agrostis curtisii* – *Erica cinerea* sub-community (64.1%)

Annex I: 4030 Dry heaths / 4010 Wet heath

Proxy environmental data

Light: 6.9 Reaction: 2.9 Wetness: 5.9 Fertility: 2.1 Salinity: 0.0

Conservation value

Most examples of this vegetation qualify as EU Annex I habitat 4030 Dry heaths. Where *Molinia caerulea* is abundant, habitat 4010 Wet heaths should be considered. This is on average a moderately species-poor heath community (species/4 m² = 14.7, n = 66).

Management

These heaths may be used as rough grazing land (typically for sheep), in which case burning may be periodically used across large areas to suppress the dwarf shrubs and encourage grass growth. Overgrazing can also be a problem, resulting in the decline of *Erica* and *Calluna*. Another threat is agricultural improvement. Stretches of heath along coastal cliffs are often unsuitable for grazing and are essentially unmanaged.

Key references

Perrin, P.M., Barron, S.J., Roche, J.R. & O'Hanrahan, B. (2014) Guidelines for a national survey and conservation assessment of upland vegetation and habitats in Ireland. *Irish Wildlife Manuals*, No. 79. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Synopsis version: V1.0

Synopsis date: November 2017

Synopsis author(s): P.M. Perrin



Photo 1. HE2A *Ulex gallii* – *Erica cinerea* heath, Cloghfune, Torc Mountain, Killarney National Park, Kerry
(J. Denyer/E. Joyce, July 2011)



Photo 2. HE2A *Ulex gallii* – *Erica cinerea* heath, Gowlaneard, An Cnapán Mór, Kerry (R. Hodd, August 2011)