



Scientific name	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i> – <i>Molinia caerulea</i> – <i>Erica cinerea</i> heath
Common name	Heather – Purple Moor-grass – Bell Heather heath
Community code	HE2D

Vegetation

This community is typically dominated by bushes of *Calluna vulgaris* but tufts or small tussocks of *Molinia caerulea* are also plentiful. These are accompanied by *Potentilla erecta* and both *Erica cinerea* and *Erica tetralix*. There are few other vascular plants, with the sedges *Eriophorum vaginatum*, *Eriophorum angustifolium* and *Trichophorum cespitosum/germanicum* being only occasional. The bryophyte layer is largely pleurocarpous in character, with *Hylocomium splendens*, *Rhytidiadelphus loreus*, *Hypnum jutlandicum* and *Pleurozium schreberi* occurring, but crimson patches of *Sphagnum capillifolium* are also frequently encountered here.

Ecology

This is a community of the lower to middle slopes of hills and mountains (mean altitude = 227 m, $n = 56$), primarily wet heathland where soils are rather poorly drained, acidic and infertile.

Sub-communities

No sub-communities have been described for this community.

Similar communities

Molinia caerulea is more abundant in this community than elsewhere in group HE2. In the *Molinia*-dominated communities of group HE4, *Calluna vulgaris* is usually sub-ordinate and *Erica cinerea* is much less frequent.

Records and distribution

Number of records (all)

Clearly assigned:	258
Transitional:	40
Total:	298

Number of records (mapped)

2001-2015:	71
1986-2000:	196
1971-1985:	2
Pre-1971:	4
Total:	273

Number of hectads (most recent records)

2001-2015:	28
1986-2000:	23
1971-1985:	1
Pre-1971:	1
Total:	53

Number of hectads (all mapped records)

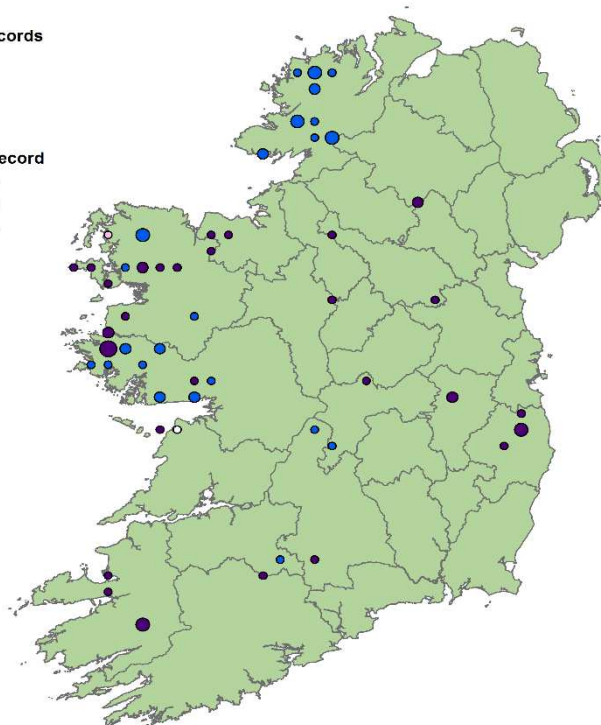
2001-2015:	28
1986-2000:	30
1971-1985:	2
Pre-1971:	3

Number of records

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

Most recent record

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



Synoptic table (n = 230)

Species	Frequency	Cover	Species	Frequency	Cover
	(from I-V)	min (med) max		(from I-V)	min (med) max
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	V	4-(8)-10	<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	I	+-(3)-5
<i>Molinia caerulea</i>	V	3-(6)-9	<i>Blechnum spicant</i>	I	1-(3)-4
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	V	+-(3)-7	<i>Racomitrium lanuginosum</i>	I	+-(2)-3
<i>Erica cinerea</i>	IV	+-(4)-7	<i>Scleropodium purum</i>	I	+-(2)-7
<i>Erica tetralix</i>	IV	1-(3)-7	<i>Scapania gracilis</i>	I	1-(2)-5
<i>Hylocomium splendens</i>	IV	+-(4)-8	<i>Thuidium tamariscinum</i>	I	+-(3)-7
<i>Rhytidiadelphus loreus</i>	IV	+-(3)-7	<i>Juncus squarrosus</i>	I	1-(4)-5
<i>Hypnum jutlandicum</i>	III	+-(4)-9	<i>Leucobryum glaucum</i>	I	+-(3)-8
<i>Sphagnum capillifolium</i>	III	+-(4)-9	<i>Carex panicea</i>	I	1-(3)-5
<i>Pleurozium schreberi</i>	III	1-(3)-8	<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>	I	+-(3)-6
<i>Cladonia portentosa</i>	II	+-(3)-8	<i>Hypnum cupressiforme</i>	I	3-(7)-8
<i>Trichophorum cesp./germanicum</i>	II	+-(3)-8	<i>Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus</i>	I	+-(2)-5
<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>	II	+-(3)-7	<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i>	I	2-(3)-5
<i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>	II	2-(3)-7	<i>Polytrichum commune</i>	I	2-(2)-5
<i>Polygala serpyllifolia</i>	I	+-(2)-3	<i>Polytrichum formosum</i>	I	2-(2)-2
<i>Plagiothecium undulatum</i>	I	+-(2)-4	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	I	2-(3)-7
<i>Dicranum scoparium</i>	I	+-(2)-5	<i>Carex binervis</i>	I	+-(2)-5
<i>Breutelia chrysocoma</i>	I	1-(3)-5	<i>Sphagnum subnitens</i>	I	1-(4)-5
<i>Odontoschisma sphagni</i>	I	+-(2)-4	<i>Agrostis canina/vinealis</i>	I	1-(3)-5
<i>Diplophyllum albicans</i>	I	+-(3)-5	<i>Nardus stricta</i>	I	2-(3)-7

Affinities

GHI: HH3 Wet heath

ZM: OXY-01A Ericion tetralicis Schwickerath 1933

EUNIS: F4.11 Northern wet heaths

NVC: M15c *Scirpus cespitosus* – *Erica tetralix* wet heath *Cladonia* sub-community (62.2%)

Annex I:4010 Wet heath

Proxy environmental data

Light: 6.8 Reaction: 2.4 Wetness: 6.4 Fertility: 2.0 Salinity: 0.0

Conservation value

Most examples of this vegetation qualify as EU Annex I habitat 4010 Wet heath. This is on average a moderately species-poor community (species/4 m² = 16.7, n = 110)

Management

These heaths, which often form parts of commonages, may be used as rough grazing land (typically for sheep). Burning may be periodically used across large areas to suppress the dwarf shrubs and encourage grass growth. Overgrazing can also be a problem. Other threats are agricultural improvement and afforestation.

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. HE2D *Calluna vulgaris* – *Molinia caerulea* – *Erica cinerea* heath, Bellanasally, Slievemore, Mayo (O. Daly, September 2010)



Photo 2. HE2D *Calluna vulgaris* – *Molinia caerulea* – *Erica cinerea* heath, Gortadirra, Tomies Mountain, Killarney National Park, Kerry (J. Denyer, July 2011)