



<b>Scientific name</b>	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i> – <i>Racomitrium lanuginosum</i> heath
<b>Common name</b>	Heather – Woolly Fringe-moss heath
<b>Community code</b>	HE3D

### Vegetation

*Calluna vulgaris* and *Racomitrium lanuginosum* dominate in this low-growing, wind-clipped heath, together forming a carpet of springy vegetation. *Erica cinerea* and *Vaccinium myrtillus* are also constants and *Empetrum nigrum* frequently adds to the dwarf shrub component. *Potentilla erecta* and some thin tufts of *Deschampsia flexuosa* are likely to be found. The bryophyte layer is scarcely lower than the other plants and here *Hypnum jutlandicum* and *Rhytidiadelphus loreus* join the hoary mounds of *Racomitrium*. Lichens are a regular feature of this community, with the forking shoots of *Cladonia uncialis* a constant presence and *Cladonia portentosa* frequent. These heaths are dotted with occasional, clustered shoots of *Huperzia selago*.

### Ecology

This is a montane heath community of exposed upper mountain slopes, ridges and plateaux (mean altitude = 530 m,  $n = 190$ ). The soil is shallow, acidic and infertile. These heaths are typically strewn with rock fragments.

### Sub-communities

Two sub-communities have been described. The *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* – *Juniperus communis* sub-community (HE3Di) is easily identified as *Arctostaphylos* is invariably present and *Juniperus communis* is frequent. These species are not found in the typical sub-community (HE3Dii).

### Similar communities

The abundance of *Racomitrium lanuginosum* makes this a striking community. It could be confused with HE3E *Racomitrium lanuginosum* – *Festuca vivipara* heath, but in that assemblage *Calluna vulgaris* is less abundant and there is a greater grass component. In community HE3B *Calluna vulgaris* – *Scapania gracilis* heath, pleurocarpous mosses and *Sphagnum capillifolium* tend to be more prominent. The present community lacks the *Nardus stricta* patches of community HE3C.

### Records and distribution

#### Number of records (all)

Clearly assigned:	212
Transitional:	15
Total:	227

#### Number of records (mapped)

2001-2015:	149
1986-2000:	54
1971-1985:	3
Pre-1971:	13
Total:	219

#### Number of hectads (most recent records)

2001-2015:	32
1986-2000:	3
1971-1985:	0
Pre-1971:	0
Total:	35

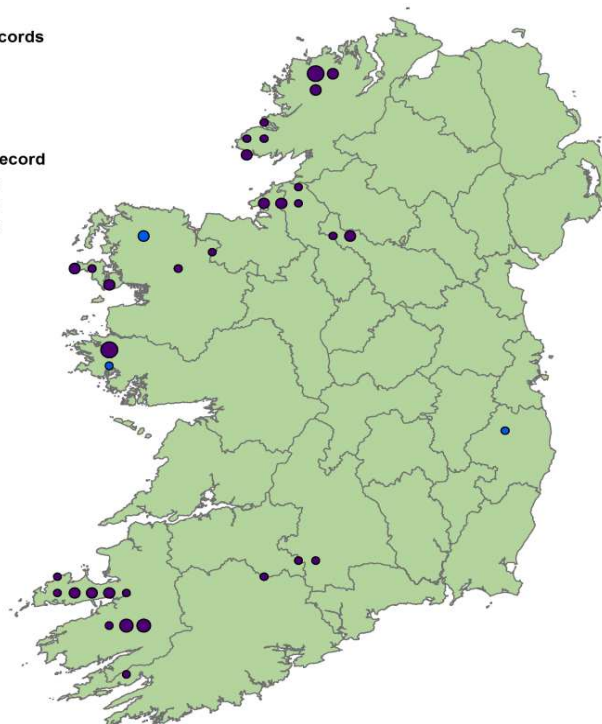
#### Number of hectads (all mapped records)

2001-2015:	32
1986-2000:	4
1971-1985:	2
Pre-1971:	4

#### Number of records



#### Most recent record



**Synoptic table (n = 205)**

Species	Frequency	Cover	Species	Frequency	Cover
	(from I-V)	min (med) max		(from I-V)	min (med) max
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	V	3-(8)-9	<i>Galium saxatile</i>	II	+-(2)-3
<i>Racomitrium lanuginosum</i>	V	2-(7)-9	<i>Herbertus aduncus</i>	II	+-(3)-7
<i>Hypnum jutlandicum</i>	V	+-(2)-7	<i>Festuca vivipara</i>	II	+-(2)-3
<i>Cladonia uncialis</i>	V	+-(2)-7	<i>Agrostis canina/vinealis</i>	II	+-(2)-4
<i>Erica cinerea</i>	IV	+-(3)-8	<i>Carex binervis</i>	I	2-(2)-5
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	IV	+-(2)-5	<i>Dicranella heteromalla</i>	I	2-(2)-3
<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>	IV	+-(2)-7	<i>Sphagnum capillifolium</i>	I	+-(3)-9
<i>Rhytidiadelphus loreus</i>	IV	+-(2)-5	<i>Juncus squarrosus</i>	I	+-(4)-8
<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i>	IV	+-(2)-5	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	I	+-(5)-8
<i>Diplophyllum albicans</i>	III	+-(2)-5	<i>Campylopus flexuosus</i>	I	+-(2)-3
<i>Empetrum nigrum</i>	III	+-(3)-8	<i>Cladonia subcervicornis</i>	I	+-(2)-3
<i>Hylocomium splendens</i>	III	+-(2)-7	<i>Trichophorum cesp./germanicum</i>	I	+-(2)-5
<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	III	+-(3)-5	<i>Lophozia ventricosa</i>	I	+-(2)-3
<i>Scapania gracilis</i>	III	+-(2)-5	<i>Frullania tamarisci</i>	I	+-(2)-3
<i>Dicranum scoparium</i>	III	+-(2)-3	<i>Nardus stricta</i>	I	1-(2)-4
<i>Cladonia portentosa</i>	III	+-(2)-7	<i>Cladonia furcata</i>	I	+-(2)-3
<i>Pleurozia purpurea</i>	III	+-(3)-5	<i>Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus</i>	I	+-(2)-3
<i>Pleurozium schreberi</i>	III	+-(2)-5	<i>Breutelia chrysocoma</i>	I	+-(2)-5
<i>Cladonia arbuscula</i>	II	+-(2)-7	<i>Cetraria islandica</i>	I	+-(2)-3
<i>Huperzia selago</i>	II	+-(2)-3	<i>Juniperus communis</i>	I	2-(3)-7

**Affinities**

GHI: HH4 Montane heath

ZM: LOI-01A Loiseleurio procumbentis – Vaccinion Br.-Bl in Br.-Bl. et Jenny 1926

EUNIS: F2.251 Hiberno-Scotian dwarf mountain heaths

NVC: H12a *Calluna vulgaris* – *Vaccinium myrtillus* heath *Calluna vulgaris* sub-community (59.7%) [also, H14c *Calluna vulgaris* – *Racomitrium lanuginosum* heath *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* sub-community (56.3%)]

Annex I:4060 Alpine and subalpine heath

**Proxy environmental data**

Light: 6.7      Reaction: 2.1      Wetness: 5.2      Fertility: 1.7      Salinity: 0.0

**Conservation value**

Almost all of the examples of this vegetation qualify as EU Annex I habitat 4060 Alpine and subalpine heath. This is on average a heath community of middling diversity (species/4 m<sup>2</sup> = 18.8, n = 191).

**Management**

These heaths, which often form parts of commonages, may be used as rough grazing land (typically for sheep) and overgrazing can be a problem. Climate change threatens arctic-alpine species which are restricted to montane communities such as this.

**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. HE3D *Calluna vulgaris* – *Racomitrium lanuginosum* heath, Arroo, Arroo Mountain, Leitrim  
(J. Fuller, September 2012)



Photo 2. HE3D *Calluna vulgaris* – *Racomitrium lanuginosum* heath, Dunmakeever, Cuilcagh, Cavan  
(P. Perrin, September 2012)