

Scientific name	<i>Molinia caerulea</i> – <i>Myrica gale</i> flush
Common name	Purple Moor-grass – Bog-myrtle flush
Community code	HE4F

Vegetation

Dense tussocks of *Molinia caerulea* dominate this peatland community, accompanied by a good cover of the twiggy shrub *Myrica gale* with its distinctive resinous smell. Amongst the tussocks, there are usually stems of *Potentilla erecta* and some sparse patches of *Erica tetralix*. Frequently encountered are *Succisa pratensis*, *Schoenus nigricans*, *Carex panicea*, *Calluna vulgaris* and *Eriophorum angustifolium*. The bryophyte layer is somewhat unimpressive, normally formed of *Sphagnum palustre*, *Sphagnum subnitens* or *Sphagnum subsecundum* agg. In western Mayo and Galway, *Erica erigena* may be present and can be co-dominant.

Ecology

Myrica gale is an indicator of flushing and this vegetation occurs in flushed areas of wet heaths, blanket bogs and raised bogs. The peaty substrate is infertile and acidic. Mean altitude = 77 m, $n = 34$; mean slope = 2.2°, $n = 31$; mean extent of bare peat = 3.1%, $n = 36$.

Sub-communities

No sub-communities have been described for this community.

Similar communities

This is the wettest of the HE communities. The presence and usual abundance of *Myrica gale* serves to differentiate the HE4F community from the other *Molinia*-dominated communities of group HE4.

Records and distribution

Number of records (all)

Clearly assigned:	199
Transitional:	40
Total:	239

Number of records (mapped)

2001-2020:	66
1986-2000:	92
1971-1985:	53
Pre-1971:	10
Total:	221

Number of hectads (by most recent time period)

2001-2020:	17
1986-2000:	22
1971-1985:	15
Pre-1971:	0
Total:	54

Number of hectads (records in each time period)

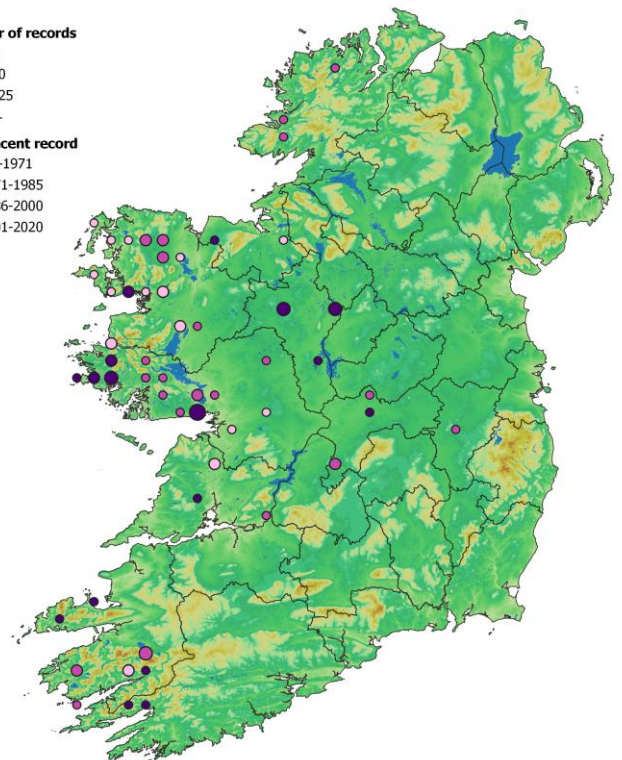
2001-2020:	17
1986-2000:	26
1971-1985:	20
Pre-1971:	4

Number of records

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

Most recent record

- pre-1971
- 1971-1985
- 1986-2000
- 2001-2020



Synoptic table (n = 147)

Species	Frequency	Cover	Species	Frequency	Cover
	(from I-V)	min (med) max		(from I-V)	min (med) max
<i>Molinia caerulea</i>	V	4-(8)-10	<i>Carex pulicaris</i>	I	2-(3)-5
<i>Myrica gale</i>	V	2-(5)-10	<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>	I	+(3)-8
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	IV	+(3)-8	<i>Scleropodium purum</i>	I	1-(3)-5
<i>Erica tetralix</i>	IV	1-(3)-7	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	I	+(3)-7
<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	III	1-(3)-7	<i>Campylium stellatum</i>	I	+(2)-7
<i>Schoenus nigricans</i>	III	1-(5)-8	<i>Sphagnum capillifolium</i>	I	1-(3)-5
<i>Carex panicea</i>	III	1-(3)-5	<i>Breutelia chrysocoma</i>	I	1-(3)-5
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	III	2-(3)-8	<i>Calliergonella cuspidata</i>	I	1-(3)-5
<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>	III	+(3)-7	<i>Juncus acutiflorus</i>	I	2-(3)-8
<i>Narthecium ossifragum</i>	II	+(3)-7	<i>Eleocharis multicaulis</i>	I	2-(5)-8
<i>Carex echinata</i>	II	+(3)-7	<i>Sphagnum papillosum</i>	I	1-(3)-8
<i>Phragmites australis</i>	II	2-(3)-7	<i>Erica erigena</i>	I	5-(7)-9
<i>Cirsium dissectum</i>	II	2-(3)-5	<i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>	I	2-(3)-7
<i>Polygala serpyllifolia</i>	II	+(2)-3	<i>Hylocomium splendens</i>	I	1-(3)-5
<i>Sphagnum palustre</i>	II	1-(3)-8	<i>Kindbergia praelonga</i>	I	+(3)-7
<i>Sphagnum subnitens</i>	II	+(5)-7	<i>Carex hostiana</i>	I	2-(3)-3
<i>Sphagnum subsecundum</i> agg.	II	2-(3)-7	<i>Carex lasiocarpa</i>	I	2-(5)-7
<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>	I	+(2)-3	<i>Carex nigra</i>	I	2-(4)-5
<i>Hypnum jutlandicum</i>	I	1-(3)-7	<i>Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus</i>	I	1-(3)-3
<i>Anagallis tenella</i>	I	2-(3)-5	<i>Juncus effusus</i>	I	2-(3)-7

Affinities

GHI: HH3 Wet heath / PB1 Raised bog / PB2 Upland blanket bog / PB3 Lowland blanket bog / PF2 Poor fen and flush
 ZM: PB01A *Erica tetralix* Schwickerath 1933
 EUNIS: D2.2A *Myrica gale* scrub on poor fens
 NVC: M25a *Molinia caerulea*-*Potentilla erecta* mire *Erica tetralix* sub-community (61.1%)
 Annex I: 4010 Wet heath / 7120 Degraded raised bogs / 7130 Blanket bog (active)*

Proxy environmental data

Light: 7.4 Reaction: 3.4 Wetness: 8.1 Fertility: 2.1 Salinity: 0.0

Conservation value

Stands of this community may be part of broader areas corresponding to EU HD Annex I habitats 4010 Wet heaths or 7130 Blanket bog (active)*. Stands within raised bog complexes could be considered as 7120 Degraded raised bog depending upon the results of hydrological modelling. It is a rather species-poor community (species/4 m² = 15.4, n = 92).

Management

This community, which often forms parts of commonages, may be used as rough grazing land (typically for sheep); overgrazing may be a problem. Burning may be periodically used across large areas to suppress the dwarf shrubs and encourage grass growth. Other threats are afforestation, agricultural improvement, drainage and peat extraction.

Key references

MhicDaeid, E.C. (1976) A phytosociological and ecological study of the vegetation of peatlands and heaths in the Killarney Valley. (Ph.D. thesis). Trinity College, Dublin.
 Mooney, E. (1991) A phytosociological and palaeoecological study of the wetlands of the Lower Corrib Basin, Co. Galway, Ireland. (Ph.D. thesis). National University of Ireland Galway.
 Foss, P. (1986) The distribution, phytosociology, autoecology and post-glacial history of *Erica erigena* R. Ross in Ireland. (Ph.D. thesis). University College, Dublin.

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Synopsis author(s): P.M. Perrin



Photo 1. HE4F *Molinia caerulea* – *Myrica gale* flush, Derrycunihy, Killarney National Park, Kerry (J. Denyer, July 2011)



Photo 2. HE4F *Molinia caerulea* – *Myrica gale* flush, Cloghaneanode, Stradbally Mountain, Kerry (R. Hodd, August 2011)