

7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*

Management of Natura 2000 habitats. Summary



Rhynchosporion community, Moulinel wet heath, northern France. Photo : Sylvain Tourte

Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion* are pioneer communities of humid exposed peat or sometimes sand, with *Rhynchospora alba*, *R. fusca*, *Drosera intermedia*, *D. rotundifolia*, *Lycopodiella inundata*, forming on cutover CHECK areas of blanket or raised bogs, but also on naturally seep- or frost-eroded areas of wet heaths and bogs, in flushes and in the fluctuation zone of oligotrophic pools with sandy, slightly peaty substratum (European Commission 2007). These communities, which are rare at European scale, have a short-lived existence and occur in fragmentary stands.

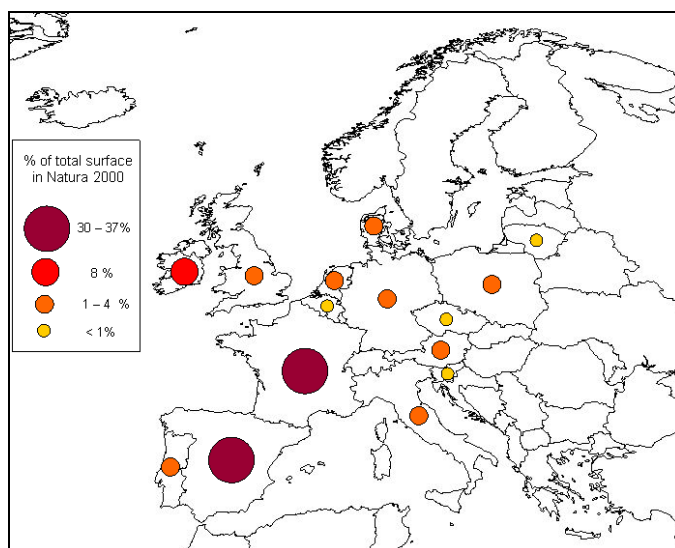
This habitat type appears to be widely distributed in the EU, especially in the Atlantic and Continental biogeographical regions. Due to its existence as a microhabitat within larger habitats of Annex 1 of Habitat directive (7110, 7120, 4010, 4020, 3110, 3130, 3160), the area covered by *Rhynchosporion* communities as well as its geographical extent is often difficult to evaluate.

Stands of *Rhynchosporion* communities have experienced a severe regression and strong deterioration of habitat quality last decades, particularly linked to the abandonment of traditional exploitation creating artificial stripped areas favourable to *Rhynchosporion* pioneer species development and the maintenance of open spaces on the one hand, and more generally to wetlands destruction or abandonment on the other.

Rhynchosporion communities have strong requirements regarding water in terms of quality (oligotrophy, acidity) and quantity (constant humidity) and concerning the presence of open areas and bare peat areas occurring through natural or artificial disturbances.

Consequently, to ensure its ecological existence conditions, *Rhynchosporion* management has to be considered at two different levels: the maintenance of a complex of peaty habitats (mires or wet heaths) and the maintenance of pioneer stands within these habitats. Indeed, the functioning integrity of mires and bogs in which the pioneer community occurs in mosaic as a sub-habitat should be preserved both with regard to the regulation of the water balance and the maintenance of open areas. These objectives can be achieved through restoring and stabilizing favourable hydrological conditions and introducing or maintaining extensive grazing and mowing activities.

At the stand level, the improvement of *Rhynchosporion* conservation status can be ensured by creating disturbances, by locally removing vegetation, litter and part of the soil surface. Small-scale peat cutting proved to be a successful but expensive management way for plant species and invertebrate fauna typical for depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*.



Percentage distribution of the total surface of Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion* in Natura 2000.

The complete text of the document is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/best_practice_en.htm

Management of Natura 2000 habitats is a project launched by the European Commission in January 2007 aimed at defining best practices for management of habitat types included in Annex I of the Habitat Directive (92/43/EEC) that need active recurring management. Twenty six habitat types that are representative of different bio-geographical regions have been considered.