

## LIMERICK - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

<b>NAME OF SITE</b>	<b>Ballyhoura Mountains</b>
Other names used for site	<i>An Sliabh Riabhach</i>
<b>IGH THEME</b>	<b>IGH7 Quaternary</b>
<b>TOWNLAND(S)</b>	<b>Jamestown, Mountrussell, Coombs, Toor, Fanningstown, Glenosheen, Glenanair East, Glenanair West, Coolfree, Houndscourt, Coolavehy</b>
<b>NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE</b>	<b>Kilfinnane</b>
<b>SIX INCH MAP NUMBER</b>	<b>55, 56, 59</b>
<b>ITM CO-ORDINATES</b>	<b>564410E 618118N (Seefin Mountain peak)</b>
<b>1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER 73</b>	<b>GSI BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO. 21, 22</b>
<b>GIS CODE LK001</b>	

### Outline Site Description

The Ballyhoura Mountains site includes a high mountain range in southeast County Limerick, with the mountains themselves extending in to northeast County Cork.

### Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The mountains comprise ice-scoured bedrock, which itself is of Devonian Old Red Sandstone, but with some areas of conglomerates also. The mountains have been shaped and moulded during the Quaternary (Ice Age) by glacier ice abrading some of the mountain summits, as well as their shoulders and flanks.

### Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The Ballyhoura Mountains are an impressive upland range, with extensive areas in County Limerick that remain either heathland, on shallow, rocky soils, or blanket bog. Some of this peat has been cutover and eroded in places, but compared to most other Irish uplands, these areas are relatively restricted in area, and a high proportion of the area of upland blanket peat in the Ballyhouras is intact.

The Devonian sandstones and conglomerates which make up the Ballyhouras, are also well displayed at outcrop localities across the ridges, and there are conglomerate tors on Coolfree Mountain to the southeast, Long Mountain to the south, and Black Rock to the north. It is known that the sandstone bedrock at the top of Black Rock Mountain, as well as across the highest slopes of Seefin Mountain, poked through the glacier ice during the last Ice Age, as nunataks. Apart from the Galtee Mountains, these were the only ice-free areas in County Limerick during the Ice Age.

### Site Importance – County Geological Site

This inland mountain range hosts examples of relatively rare tor features atop unglaciated summits. The highest areas of the uplands are already a pNHA and SAC (Site 002036) for biodiversity reasons and the landscape of mountain glaciation is also of national importance.

### Management/promotion issues

Forestry is a significant pressure in the mountain area, and practically all of the Cork side of the range has been fully forested. Access to the mountains is restricted to hillwalkers and climbers, as there is no road access across or near to the summits. Some signboards explaining the glacial history and importance of the mountains would prove worthwhile, potentially at the trailhead to the Blackrock Loop Walk at the Greenwood (Ballyhoura) Forest, Ardpatrik, or some of the other trailheads to the mountains.



The Ballyhoura Mountains, viewed from Ballylanders.



The eastern summit of Seefin Mountain, which poked through the ice sheet of the last glaciation.

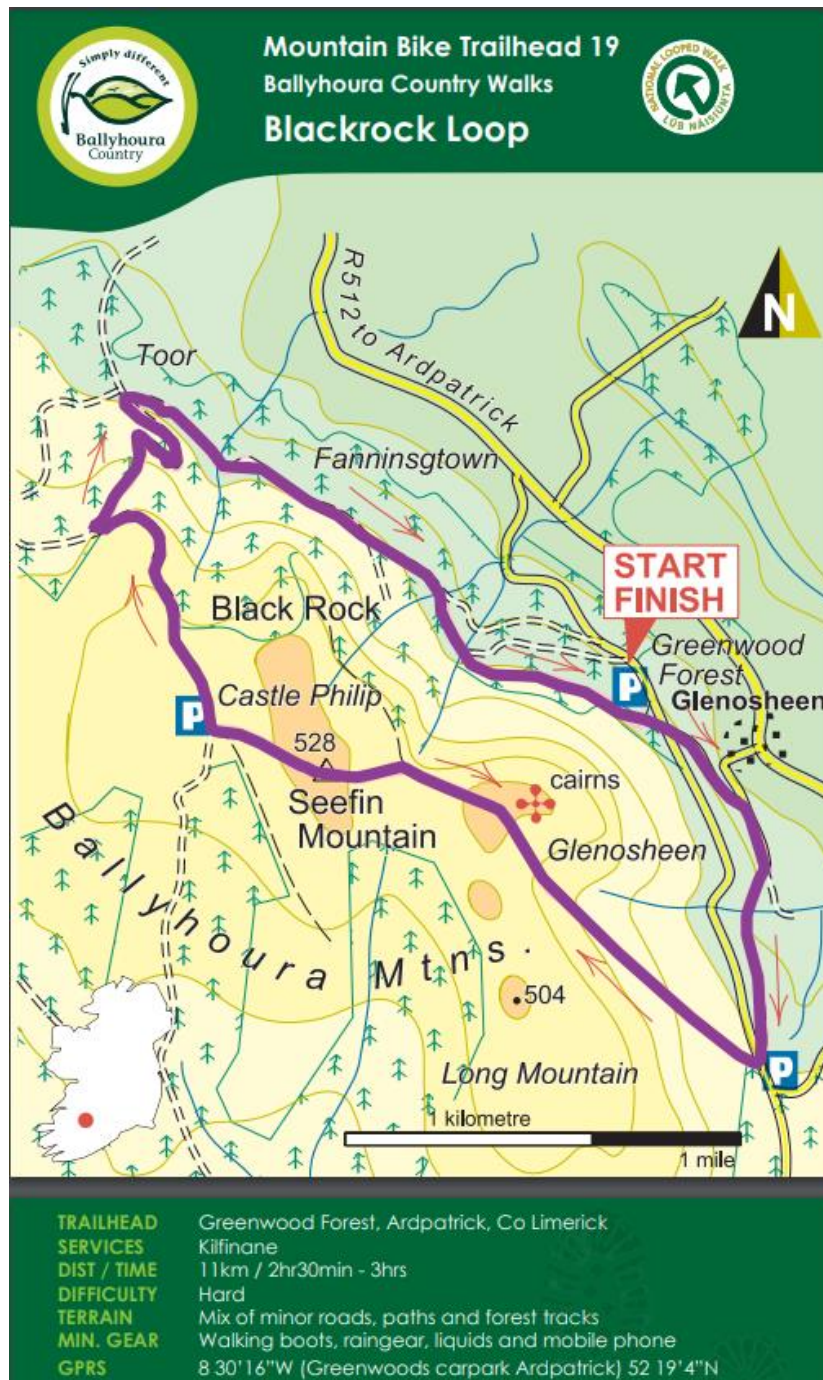


Tor at the summit of Seefin Mountain, ice free during the last Ice Age.









The Blackrock Loop Walking Guide ([www.visitballyhoura.com](http://www.visitballyhoura.com))