

Bog Life

Bogs are bleak and lifeless? Think again! A closer look at Flanders Moss reveals a place of colour and life. From spring and through the summer, seas



Lorne Gill/SNH

of sparkling bog cotton flutter in the breeze, set off by vivid moss greens. Heathers flush purple in late summer. Sphagnum grows in a variety of reds, oranges and greens, which seem to glow in autumn sunshine and last well into the winter.

Look out for the shiny green Tiger Beetle hunting at your feet. And whenever you visit, you are likely to see the footprints of deer (who like to use our paths!).

You'll also find some unique life here. The bog is home to some rare mosses, butterflies, and moths - such as the striking monochromatic argent and sable moth. When they're nesting around the Lake of Menteith, Ospreys can sometimes be seen flying overhead.



Dave Green

Argent and sable moth

Getting to Flanders Moss

Flanders Moss is 8 miles (13km) from Stirling. Take the signed track leading from the B822, 2 miles south of Thornhill. A new accessible boardwalk takes you out onto the moss in safety. Everyday shoes are suitable for this. Thornhill has a shop, pub and disabled toilet. Kippen has a shop, pub and café.



More information about Flanders Moss and other NNRs is available on-line. You can download fact sheets to bring with you and use on site, or get more in-depth information at www.snh.gov.uk

Audio or large print copies of this leaflet and printed copies of on-line material is available from,

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'Land of Water'



SNH/Dave Pickett



Pat and Angus MacDonald / SNH

Aerial view of Flanders Moss

A boardwalk across time

Our path takes you over land that in the past was visited by few people. At around 8 square kilometres, Flanders Moss is a remote place, the largest remaining intact 'raised bog' in Britain. It is of international

importance for conservation, and a National Nature Reserve (NNR). Raised bogs are special and rare habitats, but Flanders Moss is also a site full of history.

The 18th and 19th centuries saw parts of Flanders Moss improved for farming, with help from 'The Moss Lairds'. These dispossessed Perthshire Highlanders were tenants of landowners. They lived rent-free at the edge of the moss, but as part of their tenancy, had to convert the bog to agricultural land. They dug drainage ditches and cleared peat by floating it down the River Forth. Hundreds of hectares were converted to farmland in this way and you can still see signs of this work today.



Pat and Angus MacDonald / SNH

Remnants of the Moss Lairds' Plots at South Flanders

Good bog

A good raised bog is an 'active' bog, where the water table is high enough



Sphagnum moss

for sphagnum mosses to grow at the surface. The mosses also help to hold water. Under the surface, old moss growth and plant roots build up, decomposing

and compressing to form a layer of peat. Over time, the peat layer grows and eventually the bog surface rises above ground level in a dome shape. This is what makes Flanders Moss a 'raised' bog.

Bad bog, but getting better

The drains that were dug in the 18th and 19th century dried out the mossy peat, allowing scrub and trees to grow instead. SNH are working hard to restore these 'degraded' areas, by damming up old drainage channels and removing the scrub. In time, these areas will become a carpet of colourful sphagnum once again.

Be bog-safe

As you wander around the boardwalk, take your time, look around, and you will see what an abundance of plant and animal life this special place supports. Bring binoculars and you will see even more.

Please stay on the paths and make sure children are supervised: bog pools are deeper than they look and ground that looks solid may not be. The boardwalk also keeps you and the resident population of adders apart and safe from each other!

