

Silver Flowe

National Nature Reserve

**SCOTTISH
NATURAL
HERITAGE**



The Reserve

Silver Flowe National Nature Reserve is a blanket bog of international importance. This is reflected in its designation as part of the larger Merrick Kells Biosphere reserve, which is the largest upland area in Galloway unaffected by tree planting, and as a Ramsar site for the quality of its peatlands and wetlands.

The reserve is owned by Forest Enterprise but is managed through a lease by Scottish Natural Heritage.

An Unusual Name?

Silver Flowe's name is derived from the appearance of reflected sunlight on the surface of the maze-like system of pools giving a silvery cast to the whole valley bottom.

A Story Without End?

To understand why we must look at how bogs or peatlands are formed. It is best to view their formation as an ongoing story where new layers of living skin, of sphagnum mosses, grow on top of earlier layers. These new layers retain the water without which the peatland would die, and can grow

at an incredible rate of 10cm in height per year. During its long life of 5,000 – 7,000 years the slowly decaying dead layers of sphagnum moss (peat) have formed layers up to 7 metres deep in places. These layers have very sponge-like properties capable of retaining vast quantities of water.

A Living History Book

These different layers of peat can be read as a 'living history book' with chapters giving clues to past vegetation, climate and human development preserved by the anaerobic (airless) conditions. Detailed studies can show changes in acid rain and climate. It is partly for this reason that continuing its undisturbed growth is so important – hence allowing the story to continue.

Special Characteristics

There are four special aspects which make Silver Flowe important.

1. Its surface has been largely undamaged by man's activities therefore allowing the bog to develop undisturbed.
2. Its living surface of peatland is teeming with a variety of plants and animals all adapted to its waterlogged and acidic state.
3. It has an unusual uneven surface appearance caused by the well developed hummock – hollow system with a distinctive alignment.

4. Silver Flowe is unusual in that it has a mix of bog features normally found further north in Scotland with others usually found further south in England and Wales.

The Teeming Wildlife

Look out for the nationally rare Azure Hawker dragonfly which likes to sun itself during the summer. This dragonfly is at the most southern limit of its range here in Galloway. Large Heath and Scotch Argus butterflies can be seen as you walk through the forest tracks.

On close inspection you may notice all three different forms of Sundew. These plants survive the nutrient poor conditions by catching and digesting insects!

Access

Due to its wet and fragile nature Silver Flowe can be hazardous so please stay on the path. It is best viewed from above from the top of Craigeazle or Corserine.

Organised groups are asked to contact Scottish Natural Heritage to make arrangements for their visits.

For further information please contact:

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