



Muckle Moss NNR

Welcome to the National Nature Reserve

Muckle Moss NNR is mire, or 'peat-bog', that occupies an oval shaped depression confined between two parallel sandstone ridges. During the ice age moving sheets of ice deepened the basin; once the ice melted a lake was left behind. The lake slowly started to fill in with vegetation and acidic peat forming conditions developed, the open water eventually disappeared and the mire developed.

The mire surface is a saturated carpet of multicoloured bog mosses, cotton grass (the main peat forming species) and heather, along with other specialist acid adapted plants like heather, bog rosemary, cranberry and the insect eating sundew.

There are unique crescent shaped pools which have formed from the splitting of the peat as it moves slowly west east. These pools and other open water creates ideal habitat for dragonflies like black darter, common hawker and golden ringed dragonfly. Other insects of interest are green hairstreak and bog specialist the large heath.

Surrounding the mire are a mixture of habitats including dry heath, woodlands; broadleaf and conifer, and agricultural grassland. The drier heather ridges and bog edges are good places to spot adders and emperor moths. Breeding birds on the NNR include; teal, curlew and snipe on the mire, meadow pipit, sky lark and lapwing on the grassland.

Seasonal highlights

All year – A visit at any time of the year on to the mire will give a sense of wilderness and isolation along with the panoramic views over the surrounding landscape. The deep reds, ochre and green colours of the carpeting sphagnum mosses can be seen all year, but they are probably at their best in autumn.

Spring – Curlews and snipe can be seen calling and displaying throughout April and May. White cotton grass heads can blanket areas of the mire and are best seen in May and June. Adders bask in the spring sunshine on the open areas on the ridges mire edge.

Summer – Dragonflies are prolific and breed in the pools behind the dams and in the blocked drains. Large heath and green hairstreak butterflies are on the wing in June/July. By August the surrounding heath has turned purple with the flowering of the heather.

Managing the Reserve

In the past Muckle Moss had suffered from attempts to drain and plant up the mire with non native conifers; thankfully neither activity was very successful. Much of the site has remained waterlogged and recent management by Natural England has restored and maintained the high water levels, conditions that are required for peat formation, by installing and maintaining peat and plastic piling dams. Other work includes removing self-seeding conifer and birch

trees which can and establish on the mire surface and increasing water loss from the bog by transpiration. In co-operation with the land owners, conifer plantations adjacent to the bog have been clear felled and not replanted and they use their grazing livestock are used to maintain the land surrounding the mire. The dry heath around the western end of the site is rotationally burnt to give variety of heather structure; from open ground to dense mature heather

Nearby Facilities

Bardon Mill has a railway station, bus links, toilets and a pub. There other facilities available at the Northumberland National Park visitor centre at Once Brewed (4km north west) and the National Trust Housesteads Roman Fort (2km north)

Location and access

Bardon Mill, 2km to the south west, is the nearest town on the A69 the main Carlisle to Newcastle road. A further 5km east is the larger town of Haydon Bridge.

By car: At the east end of Bardon Mill village take the road north, under the A69 bridge, sign posted for Thorngrafton, follow this road through Thorngrafton. Once through the village follow the road for 1km and turn sharp left. After 500m there is a lane on the right with limited parking and a footpath sign that leads through a gate onto the NNR.

By bus: Hadrian's Wall Bus AD122 – Tel 01434 322002 or www.hadrians-wall.org.

Arriva 685 service operates daily along A69 between Newcastle and Carlisle.

Arriva 681 and 185 bus service operates Monday to Saturday between Once Brewed to Housestead's car park. www.arrivabus.co.uk

By bike: The National Cycle Network Route 72 runs along the Stanegate, a public road forming the northern boundary.

By train: There is a regular service from Newcastle and Carlisle stopping at Bardon Mill, for a time timetable visit www.nationalrail.co.uk

By foot: The NNR can be reached on the public rights of way network in the area. A public footpath crosses the NNR north from the small parking area at Haresby Road Grid ref NY790 661.

Advice notices – Please be aware of hazards present; steep-sided pools of deep open water, waterlogged conditions and very soft ground underfoot on the core mire area. There are also steep heather clad slopes with boulders and small crags. Adders and ticks may also be encountered whilst visiting

Contact

**North Pennine NNR Reserve Base
Widdy Bank Farm
Langdon Beck
Barnard Castle
County Durham
DL12 0HQ**

Find out more at

www.naturalengland.org.uk

or by calling **01833 622374**

Muckle Moss Location Map

