

Welcome to Portlethen Moss



What you can see on the Moss

As you enter Portlethen Moss you will see there has been lots of tree planting. This includes a hedge running along the fence line at the entrance which is mainly hawthorn with a mixture of other native species including, blackthorn, hazel, holly, wild rose, rowan and elder. Hedgerows provide natural corridors for wildlife to move along, they also provide shelter for small mammals and a variety of habitats for insects. The hedge will eventually be dense enough for birds to nest and roost in safely. The berries will provide a welcome food source for both our resident and winter visiting birds.

In the next area of planted trees there is a mixture of native trees, including birch, rowan, alder, goat willow and a few Scots pine. The willow and alder are well suited to the damper areas of the Moss and all of these native trees will benefit wildlife and provide a dense and natural screen from the A90 which will also help to reduce the noise.

The grassy areas in-between the trees are just as important for wildlife; they provide a haven for many different species of insects and other invertebrates. The more sheltered areas are ideal for moths and butterflies, not forgetting the grasses and flowers which provide food for many of their caterpillars.

The Moss doesn't sleep at night, it is also home to some nocturnal wildlife including, bats, owls, hedgehogs, roe deer and moths which can all be seen once the sun sets.

Many species inhabit or visit the Moss throughout the year; birds of prey, such as sparrowhawks and owls overhead or yellowhammers, perching on gorse bushes; roe deer come and go. As with all natural habitats, the Moss changes with the seasons.

Some of the things you can expect to see at different times of the year are described below.

Spring

In spring **frogs, toads** and **newts** will be active in ponds and ditches. The first fluffy balls of **hares-tail cotton grass** can be seen on stalks early in the year when most other growth is less obvious. The heady coconut scent of **gorse** becomes more noticeable as the days get warmer.

Summer

Summer's array of wild flowers includes **heath-spotted orchid** with their distinctive spotty leaves and the delicate, low growing, **sundew**. They occur in wet areas as do yellow clumps of **bog asphodel**, **tormentil** and **marsh cinquefoil**. Climbing **corydalis** creeps over other herbaceous plants. Sedges, ferns and attractive grasses such as **yorkshire fog** and **sweet vernal** add spiky or subtle shapes to the Moss. Migrant birds return. **Swallows** swoop low over the moss and **willow warblers** sing from clumps of shrubby trees. **Bats** forage as day turns to night. Look out for spectacular **dragon** and **damsel**flies, colourful butterflies and the surround sound of **grasshoppers**.

Autumn

In autumn, berries form on **rowan** trees, **heather** is in full bloom and late flowering **scabious** with pale blue pin-cushion shaped flowers can be seen. This is a peak time for **fungi** occurring, look for them on dead gorse and limbs of birch.

Winter

In winter remaining berries may attract **fieldfares** and **redwings** (migrant thrushes) from northern Europe. Parties of **tits** and **finches** will also visit trees and remaining seed heads for late pickings. As the taller grasses die back, look for underlying **mosses**. Splashes and drapes of **lichens** can be seen on willows and birch.

The Moss is a unique amenity. It is a sensitive area which is easily damaged, especially by dumping garden waste. This is your Moss, please enjoy it and look after it.



With support from Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Forestry Commission we have been able to make improvements to some of the paths on the Moss. A circular route has been created providing access so everyone can come in and enjoy the site, young or old, able or less able and especially those in wheelchairs. Other paths do exist but in some areas it gets very boggy, so footwear should be chosen with care. Areas of gorse have also been removed, in some places, to encourage heather to re-grow and in others, to allow the planting of more native trees.

Our aim is to preserve the Moss and look after this piece of wilderness in Portlethen for posterity. For those people who are interested in further information, or want to help at future events such as clean ups and litter removal, there is a local group dedicated to maintaining the Moss. Contact details can be found at our website.

www.portlethen-moss.org.uk

Thank you for visiting. We hope you have enjoyed it and seen lots of interesting items, although please leave them for future visitors! If you do see something remarkable, take a photo and e-mail it to us. We will probably add it to the website, complete with your name! Please help to keep the Moss litter free by taking your rubbish away with you and using the dog waste bins if required.

The Moss has experienced many events over the years, usually led by the **Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service**;

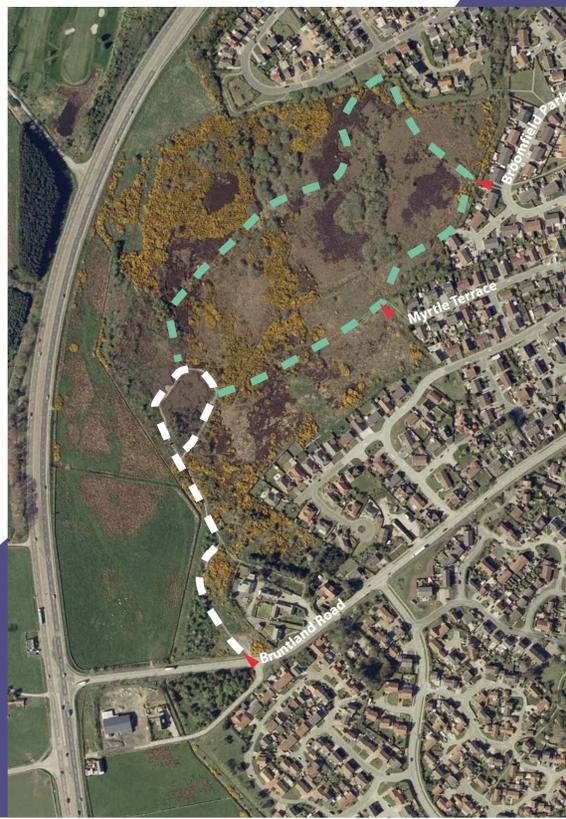
Tours of the Moss (both for local schools and members of the public), Bugs 'n' Beastie hunts on the Moss,

Tree Planting, Clean-ups, Moths on the Moss (led by the Grampian Moth Group), and many more.

Events are well publicised in local press and magazines, as well as the Council website – and of course ours!

The Moss Group also take part in local events, to highlight the Moss area.

Another local project we are responsible for is the new Portlethen Community Woodland Park, located near the Church.



Key

— Rough path

— Constructed path

© 2008 Getmapping Plc

© Ken Watson all photography

