

**Portlethen Moss** is a rare area of natural raised acidic bog which supports a variety of plant and animal species. Over the years the moss has been subject to certain development pressures and as a consequence much of what was the Moss has now been lost. The Portlethen Moss Conservation Group, SC040350, was formed to work with Aberdeenshire Council to conserve what is left of this environmentally sensitive area and as a result the moss is now a recognised Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCS).

From the main entrance off Bruntland Road **(1)** the noticeboard provides information for visitors and shows the paths that lead through the moss – some are very boggy in wet weather so wellingtons are recommended. A second noticeboard is situated just before the dry moss comes to an end and the wet moss (living bog) starts **(1a)**. The heather in this area is part of a regeneration project funded by the group and Aberdeenshire Council

As you enter into the centre of the moss **(2)** you'll sense the ecological change from dried out peatland with areas of heather and scrub, to a living bog, where the grasses and plants are those that survive in acid rich nutrient poor soils.

What to look for:

Roe deer can be seen at any time of year.

Early Spring – frogs, toads and newts (we have Palmate newts on the moss) emerge from hibernation and start to lay spawn in the ditches.

Look and listen for the arrival of Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs, our summer migrant bird species that come all the way from Africa to breed on the moss.

Early summer - the fluffy white heads of Common Cotton-grass dot the brown boggy moss as if someone has thrown a giant bag of cotton wool balls across the landscape. Also look out for Hare's Tail which is similar to Common Cotton-grass but with an individual 'cotton ball' head whereas the Common Cotton-grass has several heads per stalk.

**Bog Asphodel**

The swathes of bright yellow, star-like flowers that brighten a dull day, it thrives on the damp moss and its flowers attract a range of pollinating insects.

**Sundew**

One of our 2 native carnivorous bog plant species, they are very small so you need to know where and what to look for. These plants have evolved to live in the acid, nutrient poor soil of bogs by attracting and catching passing insects and absorbing them. They can be found growing on the south east side of the moss.

June/July there are many orchids growing in colours ranging from almost white to beautiful pink and pale lilac, these are Marsh Orchids.

On a warm sunny summer day look out for Dragon and Damselflies, butterflies and many species of bees and many moths come out in the evenings.

As you walk around the moss towards the far end you'll see evidence of old peat cutting rights **(3)**, a 19<sup>th</sup> century shoe was found in peat from this area, probably lost by a peat cutter getting his foot stuck in the peat and losing his shoe in the deep damp bog, then to be excavated many years later by another peat cutter. The shoe is now on display at the Natural History Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh.

It takes about 100 years to form a mere 5cm of peat. It is formed by decomposing plant residues that are compacted and build up. The moss formed after the last ice age, the glacial retreat left an undulating landscape with a hollow that filled with water creating a lake which over time filled in with vegetation which decomposed to form the peat.



White indicates easy access paths – green shows boggy desire lines only

If you would like to become a member of the group or help out at any events please contact us via our website or Facebook page