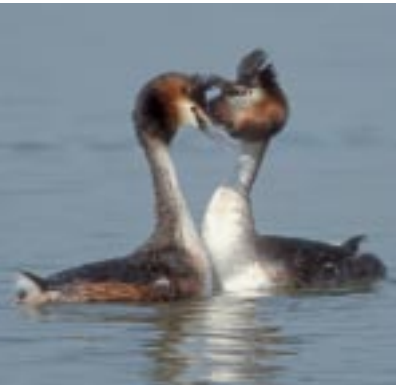




The Humberhead Peatlands

National Nature Reserve



working towards *Natural England*
for people, places and nature

As rare as the rainforest



Cross-leaved heath. Laurie Campbell

The Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve (NNR) is a very special place. Comprising Thorne, Goole and Crowle Moors, as well as Hatfield Moor, it represents the largest area of raised bog wilderness in lowland Britain. On the international scale, this habitat is as rare as the Amazonian rainforest, and therefore a very precious part of our natural heritage.





Hen harrier. Mark Hamblin

The story starts about 14,000 years ago, just after the last ice age, when this area was submerged under a huge lake known as Lake Humber. Five thousand years ago, most of the site had become woodland. The deep layer of peat which now covers the area is the result of the clearance of the woodland by prehistoric man. Enhanced by climate change, this led to the gradual formation of boggy, waterlogged conditions about 4,000 years ago.

The medieval peat winning industry was very significant. Gradual declines in extraction were halted, first by the animal litter industry in the 1880s and latterly by the developing market for horticultural composts in the 1960s. Commercial milling of peat finally stopped on Thorne Moors in 2001. The practice largely ceased within the

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) boundary of Hatfield Moor in 2004, and English Nature started the long process of ‘re-wetting’ these abandoned workings to restore the wetland to its former condition. Re-wetting revolves around damming some of the old peat drains and the formation of water-retaining compartments, so re-creating the boggy conditions where the wonderful wildlife of the Peatlands can flourish.

As managers of the NNR, in partnership with the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust which owns and manages Crowle Moor, English Nature welcomes visitors to share in the magic of this special place. A network of waymarked walks covers each site, and viewing platforms and hides have been constructed. There is a regular programme of guided walks, events and open days.

The magic of the Moors is there for all to enjoy.



Small copper butterfly.
Whitfield Benson

A Peatlands timeline

About 14,000 years ago

The Ice Age

The area is covered by the shallow waters of the great post-glacial Lake Humber.

10,000-4,000 years ago

Early Pre-history

Ice age glaciers retreat and the first hunter-gatherers move in. The dense woodland they find is home to deer, beaver and predatory wolves. A Neolithic wooden trackway was found under peat on Hatfield Moor in 2004.

4,000-2,000 years ago

Bronze and Iron Ages

A wooden trackway dating back to the Bronze Age was found under peat deposits on Thorne Moors in 1972.



1700-1900

Industrial Revolution and Victorian Britain

Small companies start commercial peat extraction for animal litter in the 1880s. Peat is dug by hand, and transported by narrow-gauge railways to the processing works. A horse-drawn barge system is also established on Thorne Moors.



© Martin Limbert Collection

1450-1700

Tudors and Stuarts

Successive monarchs hunt deer on Hatfield Chase. Cornelius Vermuyden undertakes the first comprehensive drainage of the area in 1626.

2,000-1,000 years ago Anglo-Saxon and Viking

A strong Scandinavian presence is evident from place names such as Eastoft and Althorpe. Saxons first settle and name Thorne, Crowle and Hatfield.



1000-1450AD Middle Ages

Norman overlords establish Hatfield Chase, a 270-square-mile hunting forest including Thorne Moors. The first known map of the area is the Inclesmoor map of c1450.

© The National Archives (PRO): ref. MPC1/56

2,000 years ago Romans

The Romans probably came into the area in the late 70s AD, establishing a major settlement at Doncaster (*Danum*).



1900-1970 Twentieth Century

The British Moss Litter Company continues the commercial extraction of peat mainly for animal litter. Diesel locomotives used to pull the wagons instead of horses from 1955. Extraction becomes mechanised in 1963, when Fisons acquires the company and latterly Scotts UK take over in 1998.

1970 to date The Peatlands Today

Thorne and Hatfield Moors are created as SSSI in 1970 and parts are declared the Humberhead Peatlands NNR in 1995, greatly expanded in 2005. The site also receives Special Protection Area (SPA) and candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) status. In 2001, an agreement between Scotts UK and English Nature ultimately ends large-scale peat production, within the boundary of the SSSI, in 2004.



Thorne Moors. Whitfield Benson

English Nature's aim is to establish the Moors as centres of peatland excellence, and to provide visitor facilities to match that aspiration. The hope is that future generations will be able to experience the vast, open spaces of the Moors and their wonderful landscapes in a safe and easily accessible way.

In addition, an educational programme is being developed, involving a wide range of opportunities from primary education, through to adult learning.

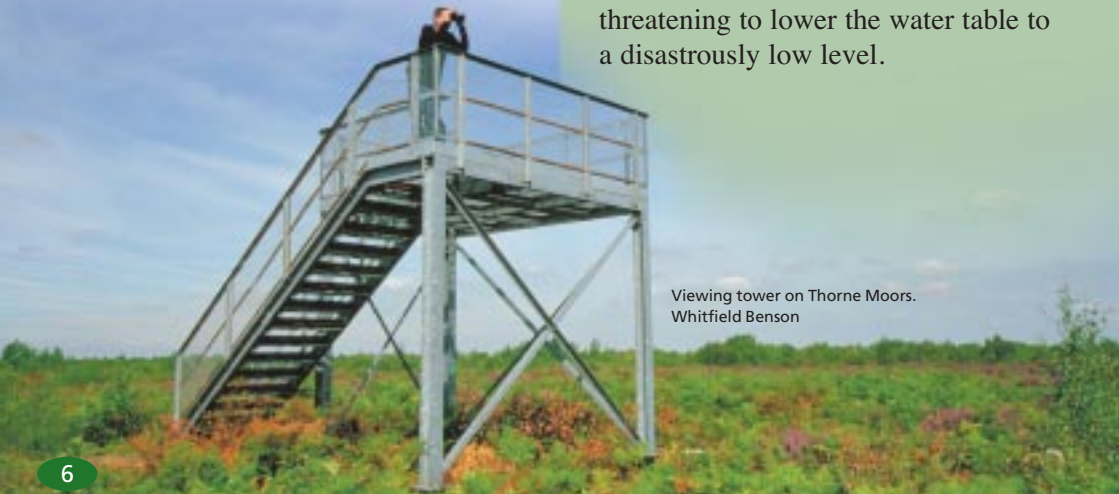
Bunting's Beavers



© John Hartley

Amateur naturalist William Bunting (1916-1995) is credited with almost single-handedly saving what is left of Thorne Moors by his vigorous

and outspoken campaigning against peat extraction. In 1972, he led a group known as 'Bunting's Beavers' which blocked drains which were threatening to lower the water table to a disastrously low level.



Viewing tower on Thorne Moors. Whitfield Benson



Sphagnum moss. Laurie Campbell

Wonderful wetland wilderness

Situated in a central position in the Humberhead Levels, the Humberhead Peatlands NNR provides a home to a number of species at their northern or southern limits.

An example is the secretive nightingale, which has its northernmost outpost in Britain here. Other southern examples currently at their northern limit include the reed

The insect-eating round-leaved sundew. Laurie Campbell



damsel-bug and the marsh pea. Northern types at their southern limit include the delicate pink flowers of the bog-rosemary and the large heath butterfly, whose eggs and caterpillars can generally be found on hare's-tail cottongrass, less so on common cottongrass.

The plant life of the moors and peat bogs is very special. Wetter sites are dominated by the peat-forming



Large heath butterfly. Geoff Trinder

Sphagnum mosses, cottongrass, bog-rosemary and the insect-eating round-leaved sundew. In the drier places, two species of British heather thrive – cross-leaved heath and ling. You may spot the pink-buff berries of the cranberry, which make an attractive sight when seen against the surrounding vegetation.



Snipe. Mark Hamblin



Whooper swan. Laurie Campbell

Birds and animals

More than 200 species of birds have been recorded here, and approximately 75 have bred, including the nationally-rare nightjar. Nightingale, tree pipit, whinchat, stonechat, snipe and teal are also amongst the breeding stars, and the reed bunting population has increased over the last few years.

Winter visitors include whooper swans, pink-footed geese and short-eared owls. From March to July, a very special summer visitor is the diminutive woodlark, and

oystercatcher, lapwing, ringed plover and great crested grebe can be spotted around the lakes. The bubbling call of the curlew is conspicuous in spring. The grasshopper warbler is a skulking bird more likely to be heard than seen.



Water vole.



The adder's dance

There is a sizeable population of adders (locally-known as 'hetherds') on the Moors. One of the strangest sights is the adder's dance – when two males rear up and twist and turn around each other in defence of their territories. Some local people used to supplement their income by catching adders either for the medicinal properties of their flesh, or for use in research or feeding other animals at zoos. Adders are now a protected species.

Adder. Mark Hamblin



Male roe deer. Mark Hamblin

Keep an eye open for birds of prey, which include the marsh and hen harrier, peregrine falcon, hobby, sparrowhawk and Britain's smallest bird of prey, the merlin. For the owl enthusiast, long-eared owl and barn owl are sometimes seen.

Among the mammals to look out for are the shy roe deer, the majestic red deer, fox, stoat and the nationally-rare water vole. The Moor's reptiles include common lizard, grass snake and Britain's only poisonous snake, the adder.



Above: Four-spotted chaser. Laurie Campbell

Here be dragons

Over 5,000 species of plants and animals have been recorded on the reserve of which more than 4,000 are insects, including some of Britain's rarest and most endangered. One of the real rarities is the unique mire pill beetle, once thought to be extinct and known only from the fossil record. Other insects include black darter and four-spotted chaser dragonflies. The broad-bodied chaser dragonfly is one of the species whose range is moving north. The 8cm long giant raft spider occurs here. Butterflies of the Peatlands to look out for include brimstone, small copper and speckled wood, but the large heath is the speciality on Thorne and Crowle Moors.

A nightingale sang on Thorne Moors

Thorne Moors represent the most northerly stronghold in Britain where the secretive, silver-voiced nightingale can be heard in the spring and early summer. It migrates here from the African savannah in April and lays its 4-5 eggs in its nest in the tangle of vegetation under the willow and sallow scrub. Contrary to popular belief, its melodically-phrased, liquid song can often be heard during the daytime too.



Nightingale. Chris Gomersall

Thorne & Crowle Moors



Grange Road, Moorends

Park thoughtfully along Grange Road or at The Winning Post Centre (courtesy of Thorne & Moorends Town Council). Follow brown site sign along disused road and take first left. Take the hardcore track which will bring you to metal footbridge and reserve boundary. Cycle rack available.

To Moorends,
Grange Road access

To Moorends,
Jones' Cable access

Moorends

Thorne Moors

Limestone Road

Jones' Cable, Moorends

By foot, leave Marshland Road at the brown site sign. Into Broadbent Gate Road. Left into Moor Lane and then right onto Jones' Cable track. A mile long track which brings you to reserve boundary.

Key

Canals Trail -
5.3km – 2 hr 30 mins,
start at Grange Road access

Green Belt Trail -
2.4km – 1 hr 10 mins,
start at Grange Road access

Decoy Trail -
4.25km – 2 hr,
start at Crowle

Southern Trail -
1.9km – 45 mins,
start at Crowle

The Peatlands Way
Long Distance Footpath

Paths

Access Routes

Parking



Viewing Tower



Will Pitts Wood

Crowle Moor

Crowle Moor

Head north from Crowle Market Place on A614. Turn left into Cross Street. Turn right into North Street and second left into Low Cross Street. Turn right into Newbigg. At 'T' junction, turn left or right to either of two parking areas.

To Crowle

Crowle

Hatfield Moor



Ten Acre Lake

By car off A614, approx. 2 kilometres south of Hatfield Woodhouse. Turn left onto a track at brown site sign.

Ten Acre Lake
Access from A614

To
Hatfield
Woodhouse

A614

To
Blaxton

Ten Acre Lake



Red Bridge Ponds



Triangle Woods

Boston Park



Boston Park
Access from A614

Boston Park

By car off A614, approx. 3 kilometres south of Hatfield Woodhouse. Turn left onto a track at brown site sign and follow directions to car park.

Packard's Heath

Badger
Corner Lake



Access
from Wroot

River Torne

Wroot



Key

Tyrham Trail -
2.7km – 45 mins,
start at Boston Park

Packard's Trail -
5.6km – 1 hr 30 mins,
start at Boston Park

Badger Corner Lake Trail -
4.4km – 1 hr, start at Wroot

Wroot Trail -
8.3km – 2 hrs, start at Wroot

Red Bridge Trail -
6km – 1 hr 45 mins,
start at Ten Acre Lake car park

The Peatlands Way
Long Distance Footpath

Paths



Access Routes



Parking



Viewing
Platform



Pond Dipping
Platform



Wheelchair
Access



Bird Hide



Viewing Mound



Wroot

Park thoughtfully in Wroot village. Take a bridleway marked by a finger post at western end of village, heading north across River Torne. Continue along grassy track to metal footbridge and reserve boundary.

Look out for the gabble ratchet

The Humberhead Peatlands are an internationally important breeding site for the nocturnal, insect-feeding nightjar. Up to 70 males have been recorded holding breeding territories. In fact, the presence of the nightjar, a migrant, was responsible for the area being declared as a Special Protection Area (SPA), under the European Union Birds Directive.

Once known in Yorkshire as the ‘gabble ratchet’ or ‘gabble ratch’ in imitation of its strange churring call, the nightjar usually prefers a dry heath habitat, where it hunts down moths and other flying insects with its wide gape. It is a master of camouflage and almost invisible on the ground, either at the nest or when it roosts in dry bracken, hence its alternative name of fern owl.



Nightjar on eggs. John Lintin Smith

Another country name for the nightjar is ‘goat-sucker’, obtained from its reputation of taking milk from cows and goats by sucking on their udders. The Latin name for this mysterious bird – *Caprimulgus europaeus* – echoes this belief, *Caprimulgus* literally meaning ‘goat-sucker.’



Getting the most from your visit



A group visit to Thorne Moors. Pete Bowler



Pond-dipping. Whitfield Benson

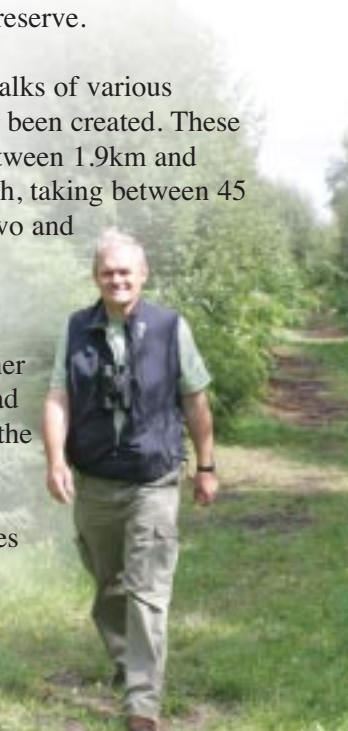
Every season has its highlights, but a walk across the Moors in late summer will be rewarded by a barrage to the senses. There'll be the purple haze of flowering ling, the constant buzz of insects, clouds of iridescent dragonflies and damselflies and drifts of colourful butterflies. And maybe even a quartering bird of prey, like the buoyant marsh harrier, scattering the wildfowl in its path.

English Nature welcomes visitors to the Moors and various facilities have been provided to help you to make the most of your visit. There are car parks around the fringe of the area, a viewing tower on Thorne Moors and, at the Tyrham Hall site on Hatfield Moor, car parks, bird hides, a viewing platform and pond-dipping facilities for youngsters, all with wheelchair access.

Interpretive panels have been installed at key points throughout the sites to show visitors what they might expect to see and explaining the history of the reserve.

Waymarked walks of various distances have been created. These range from between 1.9km and 8.3km in length, taking between 45 minutes and two and a half hours to complete.

In addition, a network of other footpaths thread each site, and the Peatlands Way long distance footpath crosses the Moors.



A walker enjoys the Peatlands Way on Thorne Moors. Whitfield Benson

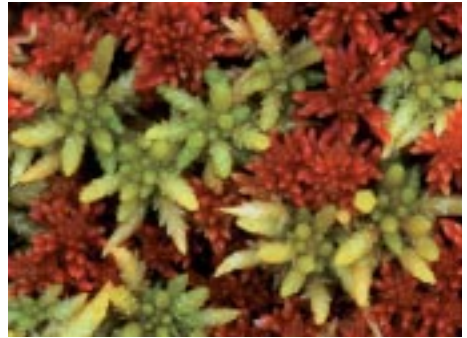


Hebridean sheep. Geoff Trinder

From Vikings to volunteers

In addition to the drain blocking and other re-wetting management work described earlier, English Nature has employed many other innovative methods to restore the precious wetlands of the Humberhead Peatlands.

In drier parts of the site, birch and willow scrub soon starts to invade. To help manage this, a flock of Hebridean sheep – thought to be directly descended from stock brought to Scotland by the Vikings over 1,000 years ago – has been introduced to graze Packard’s Heath on Hatfield Moor.



Sphagnum mosses. Laurie Campbell

Restoration has included the creation of compartments, by the construction of peat bunds, averaging three-hectares in size, so that the water can be carefully controlled. This encourages the growth of peat-forming bog species, mainly comprising *Sphagnum* mosses and cottongrasses.



Weed-wiping – a herbicide application management method of controlling birch re-growth. Whitfield Benson



Volunteer force! Pete Bowler

Ways to get involved

English Nature values the assistance of local volunteers, who are helping to retain the vital mosaic of wildlife habitats needed for the wide range of insects, birds and mammals found here.



The Site Manager leads a guided walk. Peter C Roworth

Wardening opportunities range from assisting visitors on-site through to getting involved in scrub clearance parties, dam installation and other seasonal jobs on the reserve. Or you could help with site and species surveys, such as butterfly counts in the summer months. If you are really



keen, we can offer training to get you even more involved. There are monthly work-days and plenty of chances to feed in your ideas and enthusiasm, and it's great fun!

A regular programme of guided walks, events and open days also aim to let the local community and the increasing number of visitors to experience this fascinating place to the full (see local press, notice boards on-site and *Moor News*, the regular newsletter for the NNR).

For further details on volunteering, to receive literature, to arrange a group visit or for guided walk bookings please call 01924 334500.



Peat bogs can be dangerous places, so although we want you to enjoy your visit, the following are a few safety tips you should observe while visiting the Moors:

- Re-wetted peat workings and deep drains are dangerous, stick to waymarked walks and other footpaths.
- Adders are found throughout the reserve – do not touch. Adders bite more dogs than people.
- Keep dogs on a lead to protect grazing stock and nesting birds.
- The lakes are deep and there are submerged objects – no swimming.
- Wear suitable wind and waterproof clothing and boots.
- In summer you'll need a sunhat and plenty of insect repellent and water.
- No cycling or motorbikes.





ENGLISH NATURE



- Rail stations –Thorne North and South. Contact South Yorkshire Transport on 01709 515151.
- Moorends is served by bus from Thorne. Contact Doncaster Tourist Information on 01302 734309.
- Crowle is served by rail and bus. Contact Brigg Tourist Information on 01652 657053.
- Hatfield Woodhouse and Wroot villages are served by bus.
- Doncaster Airport service 230, hail and ride, passes the Boston Park access.
- Contact details as above.

Front cover photographs:

Top left: A pair of great crested grebes in courtship. Mark Hamblin

Bottom left: Broad-bodied chaser dragonfly. Terry Weston

Main: Thorne Moors. Whitfield Benson

English Nature, the Rural Development Service, the Countryside Agency. Working in partnership to conserve and enhance our landscapes and natural environment to promote countryside access and recreation as well as public well-being, now and for future generations.

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