

THORNE AND HATFIELD MOORS CONSERVATION FORUM

Formed in 1989 Thorne and Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum acts as an umbrella for a wide range of like-minded organisations. Its membership is drawn from voluntary organisations such as the Wildlife Trusts and natural history societies, and it has observers from statutory agencies and local authorities. As its name suggests, it provides a place for debate, and the gathering and disseminating of information. The Forum has frequently been forced to take on a campaigning role, but this aspect of its work has always been underpinned by sound science. Research, survey and monitoring remain key activities.



THE FORUM AIMS:

- To conserve the biodiversity, and the geological, palaeoecological, archaeological and historic features of Thorne and Hatfield Moors and the wider Humberhead Levels.
- To promote Thorne and Hatfield Moors as a natural and cultural resource, at all levels.
- To encourage high quality research to provide a scientific basis for the conservation of Thorne and Hatfield Moors.
- To disseminate knowledge and understanding of Thorne and Hatfield Moors, and of the issues affecting them.
- To facilitate communication and co-operation between organisations that share the above objectives.
- To encourage understanding and enjoyment of wildlife and the countryside through education programmes aimed at the community.

FORUM ACTIVITIES

The Forum seeks to engage with local communities, schools, universities, conservation groups and others to encourage understanding and enjoyment of the special and unique aspects of Thorne and Hatfield Moors. To achieve this, Forum members run a series of day schools on a variety of subjects, publish relevant papers and technical reports and host an extensive website (<<http://www.thmcf.org>>). It also invites individuals to get involved.



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Find out more about the Forum
and how to get involved
by visiting www.thmcf.org or, please write to us
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WE CARE...



THE HUMBERHEAD PEATLANDS

The Humberhead Peatlands comprise Hatfield Moors and Thorne Moors, the latter including Crowle Moor in North Lincolnshire. A local wilderness and a landscape valued by the community, they are all nationally and internationally important for their wildlife.

The Humberhead Peatlands are a meeting place for northern and southern species. A remarkably large number of plants and animals are on their range edge here, resulting in a unique species mix.

A UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT

These raised mires are unique as an ecosystem type and differ from other raised mires in Britain. Only 10,227 hectares of lowland raised mire is left in England and Thorne and Hatfield represent approximately 31% of this. They are considered to be the only true Continental raised mires in Britain, that have strong affinities with the Baltic lowlands.

Thorne and Hatfield Moors are notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Areas under the European Birds Directive, Special Areas of Conservation under the European Habitats Directive, and they qualify as Wetlands of International Importance under the terms of the Ramsar Convention.

WILDLIFE INTEREST

In terms of its invertebrate fauna, Thorne Moors is the richest peatland site in Britain. It contains the fourth largest assemblage of rare species of any British site irrespective of habitat. Hatfield Moor is in the top ten of such sites and is acknowledged as being under-recorded.

In 2006 the recorded insect fauna of both Moors was documented in *An Inventory of the Invertebrates of Thorne and Hatfield Moors* as 4790 species - around 25% of British fauna - with over 30 Red Data Book species and over 250 nationally scarce species. Six species are known from no other sites in Britain, including three that were new to Britain in 1992.

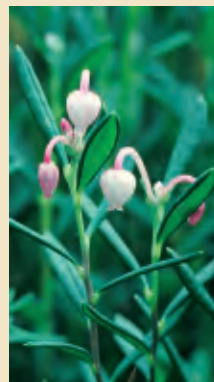


The Moors are notable as the only British localities for the Red Data Book Category 1 (RDB1) ground beetle *Bembidion humerale* and the RDB1 pill beetle *Curimopsis nigrita*, both of which are rare throughout Europe. *Phaonia jaroschewskii*, a RDB2 muscid fly is currently known only from the Moors in Britain. Further species are added every year.



Botanical interest includes Royal Fern, Bog-rosemary, Cranberry, the insectivorous Round-leaved Sundew and Bladderwort, and the Greater Yellow-rattle.

Around 240 bird species have been recorded from the Moors, including around 90 breeding species. Nightjar, the species for which Thorne and Hatfield were designated as SPA, fluctuate in numbers,



reflecting the tenuous nature and stability of the sites' breeding population. The Moors are also important for other species, including breeding populations of Long-eared Owl, Woodlark and Teal. Thorne is the northernmost breeding site in the UK for Nightingale. As recently as 2000 Common Crane returned to Yorkshire and the vast wetland has proved suitable as a breeding habitat.

HISTORICAL RECORDS

The acidic peat of the Moors creates an environment in which few bacteria thrive and where there is minimal free oxygen. This inhibits the process of decay and has allowed a veritable Domesday archive of four millennia to be preserved. Charred tree stumps yield rare clues to the activities of Neolithic and Bronze Age human communities. If the mire dries, this record is lost forever.

A NATURAL CLIMATE REGULATOR

Raised mires are huge carbon stores. The mire vegetation removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, trapping it in the layers of peat. In this way mires act as natural carbon sinks. The continued

drainage and extraction of peat resources releases carbon back into the atmosphere as greenhouse gases, adding to the problem of global warming.

PEAT EXTRACTION

Modern methods of peat extraction, especially the introduction of peat milling, has transformed the landscape of the Moors. What had taken over four thousand years to accumulate and had supported traditional peat harvesting for at least eight hundred years was so very nearly lost forever. Time had almost run out for the Humberhead Peatlands, as the corporate carnage of industrial peat mining and agricultural drainage reduced these rich, diverse and unique habitats to bare, dry peat on which life struggles to re-establish itself. Now a National Nature Reserve, peat exploitation is drawing to an end on both Moors. The challenge to 'restore' these last lowland raised mires and provide them with suitable buffer zones around them is just beginning.

A NEOLITHIC TRACKWAY

In October 2004 an amazing discovery was made. A wooden structure, made of numerous straight poles of young pine, which had been cut into during peat extraction was found on Hatfield Moors. What remained unharvested as 'multipurpose compost' has been further investigated, and radiocarbon dating indicates that it is Neolithic in origin, one of the earliest European examples of this type of timber trackway. There is some debate over the purpose and function of the structure, but it does prove beyond doubt the value of these unique Moors, not only their incredible biodiversity but also the importance of their unique archive of human activity, climate and environmental change.



...ABOUT AN EXCEPTIONAL ENVIRONMENT FOR EVERYONE TO ENJOY