

Spring 2024



Bolton Fell and Walton Mosses Newsletter

Building work at the reserve

Back in February, we had to close the boardwalk to the public to allow contractors to work on site to redesign the drainage on the old factory concrete, build a study shelter at the top of the site and install a viewing shelter out on the bog.

We are pleased to say that the boardwalk is now back open to the public. We have installed a new sign at the entrance to the Reserve. We have also installed some benches around the boardwalk to allow people to stop and enjoy the view whilst out walking. The viewing shelter is located halfway round the boardwalk and is the perfect place for some peaceful wildlife watching.

We are looking forward to welcoming groups on site to make use of the new facilities, take part in activities with us and learn more about the nature reserve. In the future, we hope to make the study shelter available for groups to book for nature-based activities.

To celebrate the completion of the works at the reserve, we are going to hold a celebration event that everyone is welcome to come and join. Find out more on the next page.



Study shelter



Viewing shelter



National Nature Reserves Week Celebration Event: Wednesday 5th June 3pm – 7pm

Get ready to celebrate NNR Week with us at Bolton Fell Moss. See inside the new facilities, join in activities & input into the future of the NNR!

Bolton Fell and Walton Mosses is home to one of Western Europe's rarest and most threatened habitats, the lowland raised bog. As a result of this, the site was declared as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) in 2019 – one of just 219 across the whole of England.

In the Spring, Natural England celebrates our most important places for nature, our National Nature Reserves, with National Nature Reserves Week. This helps to showcase the importance of NNRs to nature and society: as well as providing solutions to combat climate change, our NNRs are for people to enjoy and connect with nature.

We are celebrating NNR Week at Bolton Fell and Walton Mosses with a special event on **Wednesday 5th June 2024** starting at 3pm. **Drop in anytime from 3pm - 7pm** for an afternoon filled with guided walks, wildlife spotting and nature activities for all ages. Visit our new classroom facility and viewing shelter and give your input into the future of the reserve. Don't miss out on this chance to explore and appreciate the beauty of our natural surroundings. We hope to see you there!

The event is free to attend. Please let us know if you plan on coming so we have an idea of numbers by completing our booking form or scanning the QR code: <https://tinyurl.com/2rtj29tj>. If you have any questions about the event, please contact Ros Nicholls (ros.nicholls@naturalengland.org.uk).

Breeding Bird Season: 1st March – 31st July

During this time, it is especially important to visit quietly and sensitively and keep dogs on a short lead.

It is the time of year when the Reserve comes alive with the activity of birds and animals nesting, egg-laying, guarding nests and rearing young. Our rare ground nesting birds are particularly sensitive to disturbance. Even well-behaved people and dogs can disturb birds from their nests. Eggs get cold and are more prone to getting eaten by other birds and animals.

Many thanks for your help towards a successful breeding season for the wildlife that is finding refuge on the Reserve.



Meadow pipit nest



Northern Lights at Bolton Fell Moss



A visitor to Bolton Fell Moss in autumn 2023 managed to catch a rare sighting of the Northern Lights on a night-time walk at the reserve. We are very lucky at Bolton Fell Moss as we have some of the darkest skies in not only Cumbria, but the whole country. Luminosity levels are at nearly zero for the reserve, which means very little light is shining up into the night sky from the reserve. The dark skies surrounding Bolton Fell allow us to see the natural wonders of the night sky, but are also critical for both the health of wildlife and our wellbeing.

Light pollution in Cumbria is increasing every year, which can cause animals to become blinded and confused so they fail to feed or find a mate. Blue-rich light, such as that emitted by many modern LEDs, is particularly disruptive to humans and wildlife.

It is important to take every step we can to stop light pollution, such as turning outside lights off when we don't need them on or installing dark-sky friendly lighting. The Campaign for Protection for Rural England (CPRE) has some great advice on [protecting the night sky and tackling light pollution](#).

Work Experience Placement

Last summer, Natural England had the pleasure of welcoming a year 12 student from a local secondary school on a week-long work experience placement at Bolton Fell Moss NNR. The focus of the project work for the week was to update the photographic records of the restoration of the lowland raised bog habitat and to learn how to identify key features and wildlife found in peat bog habitats.

Despite the driving showers of rain and hail, approximately 220 images were taken (including of species) from the fixed photography points located around the site. Images were taken in eight compass point directions to create a full record of the regeneration. These will provide an important comparison to images taken in 2015 and 2017. The student also helped to paint and mark the fixed photography points to make it easier to locate the points for future record capturing, had a go at pond dipping and collected samples from the peat bog. The highlight of the week for the student was spotting a snoozing slow worm on flattened vegetation near the old factory site.



One of the fixed point photography (FPP) points at Bolton Fell Moss NNR



The student comparing differences between images taken at FPP 12 before restoration, in 2017 and now (summer 2023).

Importantly, the work experience placement provided the student with the opportunity to get a real feel for what it is like to work in the environmental sector:



“Without coming out this week, I wouldn’t have been able to receive an accurate representation of what environment conservation really looks like. With our current climate crisis, I believe that if as a collective we want others to investigate the work of conservation and restoration, we must show the young people what it’s really like! I’ve not only learnt many new things from understanding the various ecosystems sites such as Bolton Fell produce, but I’ve really enjoyed myself!

Thank you to Emma Austin SRM, and Joshua Calcott-Cooper RW for supporting the work experience placement. If anybody would like information on how we processed and supported the work placement opportunity, please get in touch.

Dragonflies at Bolton Fell Moss by Reserve Volunteer Mike Abbs

Having been captivated by dragonflies for many years I was approached to expand the sites my wife Anne and I survey regularly to include Bolton Fell Moss. So, for the last two years regular visits have been made to the site throughout the flying season between late April and October- or the first hard frosts signifying the start of Winter. Peat Mosses are excellent and vital sites for dragonflies.

Most of a dragonfly’s or damselfly’s (collectively referred to as dragonflies) life is spent as an aquatic larvae. This can be from one to five years in Britain. Like butterflies, different species can be found in different months, some emerging early, others late in the season. Early morning is the best time of day to look for emerging dragonflies clinging to vegetation as they undertake the amazing transformation to aerial insects for a few short weeks. The following species have been seen on the reserve to date and all can be seen whilst undertaking a visit without straying from the boardwalk. The species emerge roughly in the following order, but there is considerable overlap depending on weather:

- Large red damselfly
- Four-spotted chaser
- Azure damselfly
- Common blue damselfly
- Blue-tailed damselfly
- Common darter dragonfly
- Southern Hawker
- Black Darter dragonfly
- Common Hawker (see photograph)
- Emerald damselfly
- Migrant Hawker



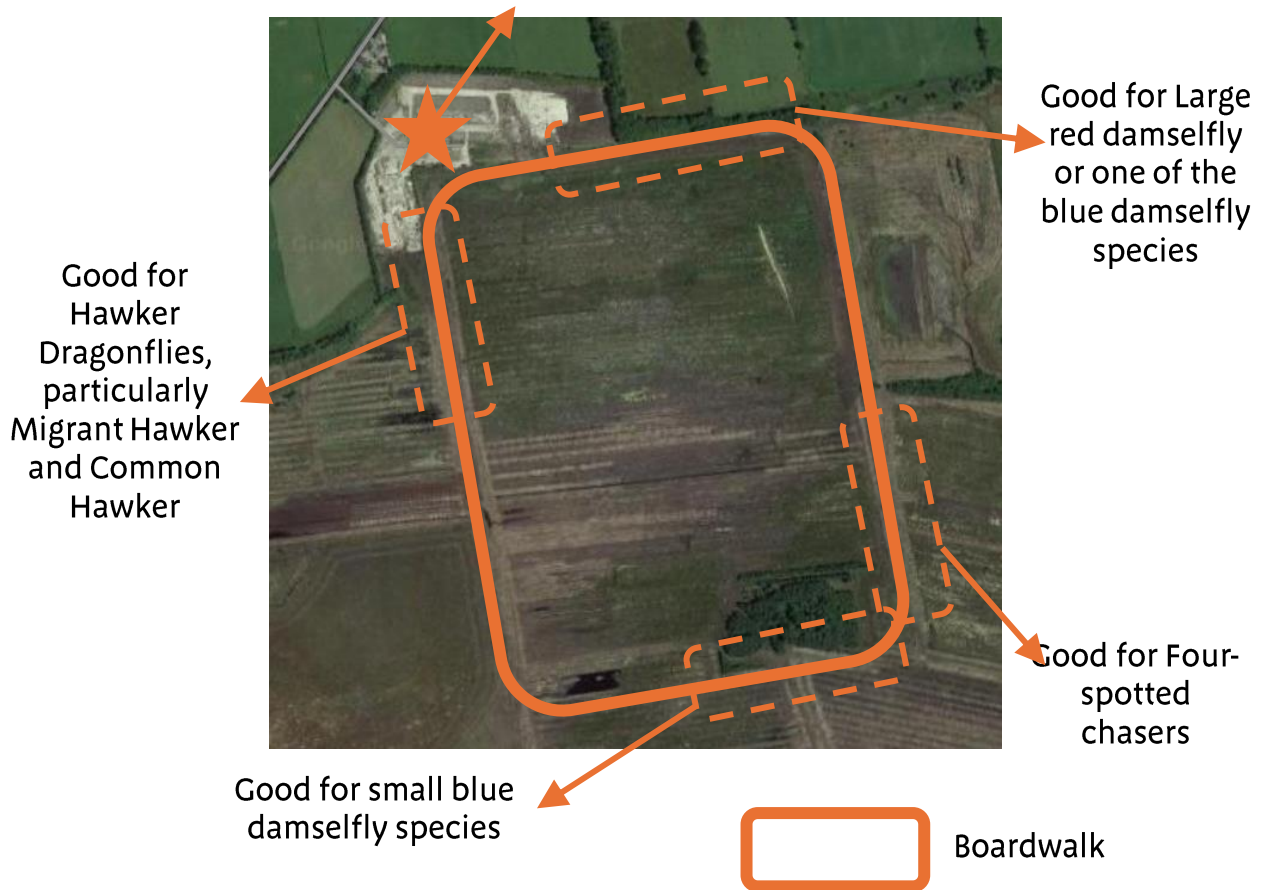
Good identification guides are available along with free assistance on the British Dragonfly Society website.

Common Hawker on a Bog Oak at Bolton Fell Moss. Bog Oak is a term that designates oak that has been buried in a peat bog for hundreds, sometimes thousands of years. The extremely low oxygen conditions of the bog protect the wood from normal decay. © Guy Broome, Reserve Volunteer.

If a walk around the boardwalk is undertaken clockwise on a warm day when the temperature exceeds 15°C the large red damselfly, or later in the season one of the blue species is usually the first encountered. The section leading to the woods is a good location to observe Four-spotted Chasers and as you continue through the woods, small blue damselflies of three species can often be seen on close inspection. The return section to the information boards has been the most productive so far for the Hawker Dragonflies particularly Migrant and Common.

The Moss is a wonderful location to encounter these amazing insects and the ongoing restoration works should make it even better.

Former Factory Site and path to access 3km boardwalk around reserve



Aerial image of Bolton Fell Moss showing the boardwalk route and the locations for spotting different dragonfly species. Image source: Google.

In the next newsletter:

- Report on NNR week celebrations
- Find out more about becoming a volunteer at the NNR
- Upcoming events and opportunities

Contact Us:

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