

Saving Aucheninnes Moss!

Aucheninnes Moss is an important peat bog in Dumfriesshire. Buglife and other conservation organisations campaigned against proposed plans to turn this classic peat bog into a landfill site. If this had been allowed to happen it would have led to the possible extinction of several species from Scotland!

“Aucheninnes Moss Devastation Sealed”

This was the headline in Buglife’s Action update confirming that invertebrate conservationists were appalled when on 13th March 2003 Margaret Cullen, who was then the Scottish Minister for Social Justice, announced that the Scottish Parliament would allow the granting of planning permission for a landfill site that would have devastated the peat bog Aucheninnes Moss in Dumfries and Galloway.

Aucheninnes Moss is a classic peat bog with wet heath areas, and the last remaining relict of the once extensive Barclosh Moss Complex. Various developments and afforestation have destroyed the other bogs in the area, leaving Aucheninnes as a last refuge for threatened plants and invertebrates. The bog's primary biodiversity

importance comes from the invertebrate fauna that has been recorded at the site, which includes the following gems: the Bog-bush cricket (*Metrioptera brachyptera*), Sorrel pigmy moth (*Enteucha acetosae*), Large heath butterfly (*Coenonympha tullia*) and Small pearl-bordered fritillary (*Boloria selene*).

Bog bush cricket (*Metrioptera brachyptera*)

This Nationally Scarce species of cricket is on the Scottish Biodiversity List. While frequently encountered on southern heaths and bogs, this is a rarity in Northern England, and Aucheninnes is its only known site in Scotland.



Members of the public protesting at Aucheninnes Moss © Paul Raeburn



Bog bush cricket © Roger Key

Large heath (*Coenonympha tullia*)

This butterfly is confined to boggy areas and its caterpillars feed on cotton grass. This species is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), it is on the Scottish Biodiversity List, is listed as Near Threatened and is in the Red Data Book of European Butterflies (SPEC3).



Small earl-bordered fritillary on an orchid © Iain H Leach

The fight to protect the site

In early stages of fighting the planning application in 2002, Buglife were not permitted by the local authority to visit the site. When Buglife tried again in September 2003, support for the site visit was withdrawn at the last minute. This may have been due to concerns that wildlife experts would find more important wildlife that would strengthen the case for protecting the site from destruction.

On the 7th September 2003 Buglife, along with over 40 local residents and national invertebrate experts, converged on Aucheninnes Moss in Dumfries and Galloway to record for posterity the biological riches of the bog before its destruction and to express their disgust at plans to turn the wildlife site into a landfill site. The day of direct action garnered excellent coverage for the site, including a big article in the Herald, Border TV News, Galloway News and the BBC News website. The survey efforts also re-found the plant Whorled caraway (*Carum*



Large heath butterfly © Suzanne Burgess

Small pearl-bordered fritillary (*Boloria selene*)

This Near Threatened species of butterfly is also on the Scottish Biodiversity List. This butterfly requires violets to complete its life cycle. Although still widespread in Scotland, this species has experienced a significant population decline across the UK.

verticillatum), the first record for many years.

A change in the strategy for waste management in Dumfries and Galloway lead to the closure of Aucheninnes landfill site in 2009 effectively saving Aucheninnes Moss from destruction.

Buglife have continued to raise the profile of this site and have a future plan to secure the long-term management for the survival of the many species that call it home.

We wish to thank everyone who have supported us in protecting this site.

Sorrel pigmy moth (*Enteucha acetosae*)

This Nationally Scarce species of moth is one of the smallest micro-moths in the world and in Scotland it is only found at Aucheninnes Moss. To complete its life cycle this moth requires sorrel for its caterpillars to feed on.

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