

Welcome to Slop Bog

Slop Bog is a place for people and nature. It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Local Nature Reserve managed by Dorset Countryside. Visitors have the rare opportunity to easily cross the sphagnum bog via the boardwalk, which also provides excellent pond dipping opportunities. Relatively short paths also meander through heathland, wet woodland and conifer plantation all within this relatively small reserve (22.6 hectares).

Slop Bog is home to:

- Dragonflies and damselflies (14 recorded species) including the rare Small Red Damselfly.
- A large colony of Silver-studded Blue butterflies.
- Common frogs, Grass-snakes and Palmate newts.
- Insects especially adapted to the heath and bog.
- Specialist plants including Marsh Gentian, Bog Asphodel, White Beak-sedge and Sundews.

With its accessibility, habitat variety and pond dipping opportunities, Slop Bog is the perfect outdoor classroom!



A Brief History

In 1759 Slop Bog was a small wet corner of Hampreston Heath. However, around 1870 much of the drier parts of the site were planted up with pine trees as part of "Beaufoy's Plantation". Fortunately, the wetlands remained unplanted so that even in 1915 the peat cutting ponds were still visible. During the 1930s "Stewarts" nursery occupied much of the neighbouring land on West Moors road. Stewarts used the ponds to cultivate water lilies and other aquatic plants for sale via the first ever mail order plant catalogue. The land surrounding Slop Bog was gradually eaten up during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by housing developments. Today Slop Bog, along with Dorset's remaining heaths, forms just a fragment (around 15 per cent) of the heathland that covered this part of Dorset in the 1850s.

Working for Wildlife

Heathland: During the summer months small numbers of hardy cattle or ponies will graze the heath. This traditional form of management will help keep in check the spread of Purple Moor-grass, which would otherwise dominate the site. The enclosures, which consist of a bank and ditch system, were created originally to contain or exclude livestock. The enclosures are dominated by wet heath, as shown by the presence of Cross-leaved heath, Marsh Gentians and Sundews.

The raised boundary banks themselves act as suntraps, forming corridors of dry heath. Upon these Bell Heather dominated banks you may be fortunate enough to discover a Potter Wasp's cell, Emperor Moth cocoon or perhaps a Wasp spider egg cell. The non-native Maritime Pine trees of Beaufoy's plantation will be felled in order to re-create an area of dry heath.

Woodland: Coppicing and thinning work will encourage a range of tree ages and species. Pine trees will be replaced with native Alder Buckthorn, Birch, Holly, Hazel & Oak. Wooded heath on the site edge will provide food and shelter for birds, small mammals, reptiles and a range of insects. During the winter months look out for Dartford Warblers sheltering and feeding within the gorse.

Bog: During the summer, when water levels are low, the traditional practice of small-scale peat cutting continues. When the heavy, wet turves are laid out to dry, the ponds are instantly used by

dragonflies for egg laying. You may see colourful Raft Spiders, which use the water's surface like a web so to catch insects. Peat-bog plants such as Bog Asphodel, Cotton Grass and a range of sedges are actually feeding upon their partially rotted predecessors.

Peat: Peat is created in water-logged conditions where, due to a lack of oxygen, old plant and animal matter is unable to completely rot down. As more dead material accumulates it is squashed under its own weight to form peat. Within the peat, pollen and timber are preserved and when excavated it can be used to understand the past nature of a site. In 1815 the Hampreston Enclosure award shows local people possessing turbary rights for Slop Bog. This meant that they were entitled to cut a small allotment of peat or heather turves, which they would then use as a slow-burning domestic fuel. Today these small warm, shallow pools are perfect for a range of aquatic wildlife.



Silver-studded Blue Butterfly



Marsh Gentian



Dorset County Council working in partnership
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Contacts:
Eastern Sites Team
Avon Heath Ranger Base
Birch Road
St Ives
Ringwood
Hampshire BH24 2DA
01425 483809
www.dorsetcountryside.co.uk

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Text by Ranger Team

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and G. Dunkling

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Ranger Services

- Access & wildlife information
- Educational visits
- Guided walks
- Work parties

Telephone (01425 483809)

Slop Bog Guardians

The Slop Bog Guardians are an active local volunteer group who help to protect both the needs of people and wildlife at Slop Bog. They assist Dorset Countryside through:

- Wildlife surveys
- Practical work parties
- Increasing local knowledge and interest in Slop Bog
- Encouraging local participation in Slop Bog's management
- Raising funds for projects

For further details
contact the Rangers.



Special Notes

- Car parking: only on-street parking is available so please show consideration for local residents.
- Follow the Countryside Code
- We aim to provide access for all. Please contact the Rangers to ensure your needs / requirements are met.
- Ordnance Survey Explorer OL22 or Landranger 195 covers Slop Bog and shows routes to the "Castleman Trailway" and the "Ferndown, Stour & Forest Trail".



Slop Bog

Slop Bog Nature Reserve

-  Pedestrian gate
-  RADAR key gate
-  Wheelchair/pushchair friendly access point
-  Mixed woodland
-  Deciduous tree cover
-  Conifer tree cover
-  Heath
-  Bog
-  Water features - pond or drain
-  Boardwalk/bridge
-  Permissive path
-  Public footpath
-  Boundary of grazing area indicated by cow icons

