

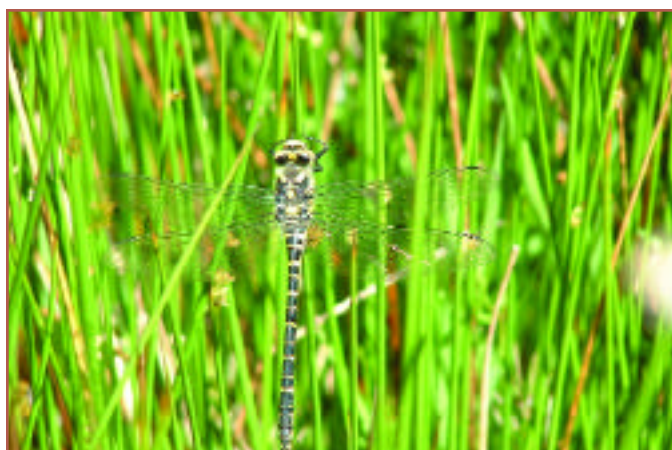
Guidance Sheet on the Management, Restoration, and Creation of Blanket Bog

This good practice sheet is intended as a basic guide for landowners and land managers to conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of Blanket Bog Habitat and help secure its long-term future. Blanket Bog habitat has been identified as a priority habitat in both the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Blaenau Gwent as it has suffered serious declines both nationally and locally.

Biodiversity quite simply means 'all living things'. It is the rich variety of wild plants and animals around us together with the habitats that support them.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species associated with this Habitat include:

Eurasian curlew	Great crested newt
Golden plover	Palmate newt
Hen harrier	Beautiful demoiselle dragonfly
Red grouse	Golden-ringed dragonfly
Skylark	Southern damselfly
Common frog	Bogbean
Common toad	Sundew



Golden-ringed dragonfly

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Habitat Description

Blanket bogs are distinguished by being permanently wet areas dominated by sphagnum mosses. They are made of peat, a material formed when conditions are too wet and cold for plant remains to decay. In some areas, the peat can be over 5m deep. They are also acidic due to the lack of nutrients in rainwater. They are mainly associated with upland habitats (moorland) typified by poor drainage, and rarely occur on slopes in excess of 30 degrees.

Although bog vegetation is predominantly sphagnum moss, they are also characterised by heaths, heathers, fluffy white-headed cotton grasses, yellow flowered bog asphodel, and the rare sundew that captures and digests insects.



Sundew

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Factors Affecting Habitat

- Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation.
- Lack of appropriate management – overgrazing leading to the replacement of large areas of once healthy blanket bog by acid grassland.
- Upland afforestation, mainly with conifers.
- Drainage of upland areas often to improve grazing.
- Cutting peat for fuel or garden uses.
- Burning of moorland.
- Climate change and deposition of atmospheric pollutants such as acid rain that removes sphagnum from blanket bogs.



Peat extraction

© Peter Wakely-EN

Good Practice

Protect, maintain, and enhance any areas of Blanket Bog on your land by:

- Maintain the vegetation by light grazing with cattle, horses, or sheep not exceeding 0.05LSU/ha/yr. Avoid grazing between October and March. Consider shepherding on large sites to prevent overgrazing and undergrazing.
- Manage any encroaching scrub or rush. Young seedlings can be hand pulled, but larger trees will require cutting to ground level and the stumps treating immediately after cutting with a suitable herbicide to prevent regrowth. Control dense stands of invading rush using a combination of cutting and grazing between September and March.



Rush bales

©Paul Glendell-EN

Establishing Blanket Bog on Degraded Areas by:

- Breaking up any field drains/pipes as well as blocking surface ditches to ensure that the water level can be maintained close to the soil surface throughout the year.
- Wherever possible, allow ditches to infill naturally overtime or move actively through assisted methods such as infilling with brush.
- Exclude all stock for at least 5 years or until vegetation recovery has been achieved. This may require stock proof fencing off areas of blanket bog.
- Stabilise exposed peat and encourage recolonisation of vegetation by spreading brush using seed harvested from healthy areas of blanket bog.

Do not carry out any of the following operations without first seeking further advice:

- Burn blanket bog that is rich in plant and insect life and sensitive to drying out.
- Plough, cultivate, or re-seed with inappropriate seed mixes, roll or chain-harrow.
- Install any new drainage systems, clear out any ditches, or affect natural drainage.
- Apply herbicides or pesticides within 10m of blanket bog vegetation unless spot treating notifiable weeds. Environment Agency approval will be required on herbicide use on or near water-bodies
- Apply any inorganic or organic fertilisers such as farmyard manure, slurry, sewage sludge, chicken manure, or fishmeal within 10m of blanket bog vegetation.
- Apply any lime, basic slag, calcified seaweed, or waste paper.
- Store any manure, farm wastes, or any other waste on any area of blanket bog.
- Extraction of peat.
- Carry out supplementary feeding or install new watering troughs.

Stocking Rates

The following conversions have been identified under the Tir Gofal Scheme run by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and will apply when calculating stocking rates:

	Livestock Units (LSU)
1 Dairy Cow	= 1.0LSU
1 Beef Animal (less than 24 months)	= 0.6LSU
1 Suckler Cow	= 1.0LSU
1 Breeding Ewe (with or without lamb)	= 0.15LSU
1 Horse	= 1.0LSU

Further Advice



Blaenau Gwent Biodiversity Partnership

Provision of advice on the restoration of priority habitats and species within the County Borough.

Tel. 01495 355702



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Administers the Biodiversity Action Grant Scheme that offers landowners and community groups small grants up to £2k for biodiversity projects.

Tel. 01495 356070



Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)

Administers the Tir Gofal Agri-Environment Scheme where grants are available for a wide range of habitat management work on farms.

Tel. 02920 772400



Environment Agency Wales

Administers herbicide consents near watercourses Tel. 08708 506506 and runs the Pollution Hotline Tel. 0800 807060

Please note, the recommendations contained on this sheet are for guidance purposes only. Due to the complexity of individual sites and the interactions occurring within them, it is advisable to seek specialist advice with relevant organisations from the early stages.

This sheet can also be downloaded from the Blaenau Gwent Biodiversity Partnership website called 'The Web of Life'. This can be accessed through www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk.