

PEATLAND KEY SPECIES: SPHAGNUM MOSS



Sphagnum Moss

● *Sphagnum Moss*

- Sphagnum is special a type of moss found in peatlands and other wet habitats.
- They form multi-coloured carpets and grow without roots, absorbing water and **nutrients** through their leaves.
- There are 30 species of sphagnum in the UK, they can be red, green, pink or yellow.

● *Why is it key?*

- When Sphagnum dies it doesn't fully break down and then it forms into peat.
- It acts like a sponge , absorbing 20 times its own weight in water helping to keep peatlands wet.
- Sphagnum provides a special habitat for many plants and animals
- It helps trap carbon dioxide from the air, which helps to control **climate change**.

PEATLAND KEY SPECIES: ADDER



Adder



Adder

- Adders are a type of snake that live in our heathlands, woodlands and peatlands.
- They have a mix of brown and black scales, forming a zigzag pattern across their back.
- They are small usually about 60-70cm long, with a large head with red eyes.
- They like to live where it is cool and damp in peatlands.



Why is it key?

- Peatlands provide good food and shelter for adders. Adders use the mossy ground, fallen logs and heather for shelter.
- They hunt mice, frogs and insects, which helps control the numbers of these animals on peatlands and helps moss to grow.
- Adders are declining in the UK because of loss of suitable habitat.

PEATLAND KEY SPECIES: HEATHER



Heather

● *Heather*

- Heather is a small **shrub** with tiny, **evergreen** leaves that grows close to the ground in bushy patches.
- It grows on heathlands, woodland and peatlands.
- In summer it has pink bell-shaped flowers.
- Historically heather has been used for many purposes, such as for bedding materials, brooms, and fuel.

● *Why is it key?*

- Heather provides shelter and nesting sites for many animals and birds, making the peatland a better home for wildlife.
- The flowers attract bees and butterflies to the peatland.
- The roots of heather hold the soil in place, preventing the peat from **erosion**.
- When heather dies and partially **decomposes** it forms peat.

PEATLAND SPECIES: THE GOLDEN PLOVER



Golden Plover

● *The Golden Plover*

- The golden plover is a small **wading bird** that lives in peatlands in summer.
- They have beautiful golden and black speckled feathers and bright golden spots on their back in summer.
- They build their nests directly on the ground.
- Some golden plovers travel long distances and use peatlands to rest when travelling between places.

● *Why is it key?*

- Golden plovers feed on insects and **invertebrates**, helping to manage their population.
- If there are plenty of golden plover it means the peatland is very healthy and in a good condition.
- They keep peatlands healthy by spreading seeds and insects and helping plants to grow.
- Draining of peatlands is causing problems for golden plovers, making it hard for them to survive.

PEATLAND KEY SPECIES: DRAGONFLY



Dragonfly

● Dragonfly

- Dragonflies are colourful insects with long, thin bodies and large, **transparent** wings.
- They come in many colours, including green, blue, and red, and have big, bulging eyes.
- Dragonflies start their lives in the water before becoming flying adults. They are quick fliers and sometimes hover in one spot.

● Why is it key?

- Dragonflies eat lots of small insects, like mosquitoes, helping to keep these pests under control.
- Peatlands provide the wet environments that dragonflies need. They lay their eggs in water, and their **larvae** live in the water until they mature.
- The presence of dragonflies indicates that the peatland has healthy water.

PEATLAND KEY SPECIES: HEN HARRIER



Hen Harrier

● *Hen Harrier*

- The hen harrier is a medium sized **bird of prey** that nests on the ground among the heather in peatlands.
- They are up to 50cm long and have a mix of grey, white and black feathers.
- They are known for their low, gliding flight over the ground and their ability to hunt silently.

● *Why is it key?*

- Hen harriers help control populations of small mammals, like voles and birds, which live in peatlands.
- Peatlands provide open, grassy areas and low vegetation that are perfect for hen harriers to hunt for food and build their nests.
- Hen harriers are becoming rare in the UK because their homes are being destroyed. Protecting peatlands is crucial to keep these birds safe and healthy.

PEATLAND KEY SPECIES: COTTON GRASS



Cotton Grass

Cottongrass

- Cottongrass is a type of plant that grows in wet, marshy areas.
- It has tall slender stems with fluffy, white cotton-like tufts at the top which look like cotton balls.
- Cottongrass forms clumps and grows in the wet peaty soils of peatlands.

Why is it key?

- As cottongrass dies and **decomposes**, it adds to the layer of peat. This helps build up the peatland and keeps it wet.
- Cottongrass provides cover and habitats for small animals.
- The roots of cottongrass hold the peat soil in place, stopping **erosion**.
- The plant provides food for some animals and insects that live in peatlands.

PEATLAND KEY SPECIES: SUNDEW



Sundew

Sundew

- The sundew is a beautiful plant found on peatlands
- It has red slender stems, the leaves are covered in red hairs and it has white or pink flowers in summer.
- It is **carnivorous!** Sticky fluid on its leaves sticks to and traps insects, then the whole leaf wraps around the insects and it eats them!

Why is it key?

- By catching insects with their sticky leaves, Sundews control insects on peatlands and this in turn supports species.
- Sundews can live in nutrient poor peatlands because they get nutrients from the insects they catch and eat.
- They add to the **biodiversity** of peatlands.
- The presence of sundews can indicate that the peatland is healthy.