



Press Release: 01/07/2019
For immediate release

Discovering the wonders of Flow Country

Schools have been on their summer term outings to RSPB Scotland's Forsinard Flows reserve to learn more about the amazing landscape on their doorstep. Children from Pennyland, Mount Pleasant and Dunbeath schools have all recently been on a discovery mission with the Education Team from the Flows to the Future Project to find why the Flow Country is so special and also so important for rare and specialised species.

On their visit to the Flow Country the children learned about why these peatlands, which form the largest blanket bog in Europe, are the perfect habitat for many different plants and animals which thrive in our cool, damp climate. Using identification charts the enthusiastic youngsters set about finding as many different species as they could on Forsinard's Dubh-lochain Trail. To their amazement, finds included insect eating plants like sundew, lizards, basking in the sun, rare wading birds like greenshank in amongst the flowering crossed leaved heath and sweet-smelling bog myrtle.

Pupils learned how to use binoculars to spot distant flying birds, deer and landscape features like the Ben Griam hills from the Flows Lookout Tower. They also entered the magic world of sphagnum swamps and used their best wizarding voices to pronounce the tricky Latin names of three of the different types of sphagnum moss found on the trail. Sphagnum moss is one of the most important plants in the peatlands as it does not fully rot down when it dies and so forms peat.

Searching for the dwellers of the dark pools on the Dubh-lochain Trail proved to be one of the most popular activities and also one of the most revealing about life in the Flow Country. Palmate newts, dragonfly and damselfly nymphs, great diving beetles were all discovered, closely examined using magnifying glasses and then carefully returned to their watery homes.

Amanda Mee, teacher at Dunbeath Primary said, 'We had a great day, full of well-planned and organised activities. The children thoroughly enjoyed themselves and learned a lot, they especially loved the pond dipping – a great activity for all ages!'

The outdoor learning activities at RSPB Forsinard are provided as part of the Peatlands Partnership's Flows to the Future Project supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The visitor centre at RSPB Forsinard is open daily during the summer. There will be a family day during the summer holidays on Wednesday 7 August. Activities will start at 9:30, 10:30 and 2pm so that families can visit by train. The event is free and it would be helpful if people could advise if they plan to come by emailing hilary.wilson@rspb.org.uk or by telephoning Forsinard Field Centre on 01641 571225.

The Feis Rois Ceilidh Trail is visiting Forsinard visitor centre on Wednesday 14th August from 2pm – 4pm, when talented young people will be playing traditional music. Visitors will also be able to sample food provided by Scotland's Natural Larder, showcasing the many opportunities for eating wild and natural products. There will be a ceilidh in the evening at the Halladale Hall from 7:30pm – see <http://www.theflowcountry.org.uk/> or <https://www.facebook.com/TheFlowCountry/> for more details.



NOTES TO EDITORS

The Peatlands Partnership includes Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry and Land Scotland, Scottish Forestry, The Highland Council, RSPB Scotland, Plantlife Scotland, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, The Highland Third Sector Interface, The Flow Country Rivers Trust, and The Environmental Research Institute (North Highland College, UHI). It is chaired by Professor Stuart Gibb from the Environmental Research Institute.

RSPB Scotland is the lead partner in The Flows to the Future project, a Peatlands Partnership project, which gratefully acknowledges funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and from the following funders and supporters; Environmental Research Institute, European Regional Development Fund, Forestry Commission Scotland, Peatland Action, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, The Highland Council, RSPB, WREN, Scotland Rural Development Programme, Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage and The Tubney Trust.

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