

The Flow Country



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The Flow Country is widely considered to be the largest area of blanket bog in the world, covering about 4,000km² in Caithness and Sutherland, in northern Scotland. Together with associated areas of heath and open water, the Flow Country is of international importance as a habitat, and for the diverse range of rare and unusual breeding birds it supports. The site encompasses an exceptionally wide range of vegetation and surface pattern types, including numerous pool systems.

What makes this UNESCO Designation special?

The Flow Country - the world's first peatland World Heritage Site - encompasses an exceptionally wide range of vegetation and surface pattern types, including numerous pool systems. Such features are usually rare and localised but in the Flow Country they are widespread, and a high proportion of the ground remains undisturbed. The range of mire types varies from those of the lowland Caithness plain in the east, through to those of the mountainous oceanic west.

This extraordinary area contains extensive areas of active blanket bog, where bog moss Sphagnum and other bog species ensure continuing peat accumulation, occur in intimate association with a range of open water, wet heath, grassland and fen communities.

This natural environment provides the diversity of habitats necessary to support a wide range of wetland and moorland species. Of particular importance are the birds, many of which are typically northern species found here towards the southern limit of their range. These include red-throated diver, black-throated diver, golden plover, greenshank, golden eagle, merlin and short-eared owl.

The Flow Country is now a key site in developing our understanding of a wide range of peatland issues, from the ecology of individual species and changes in their population over time, to greenhouse gas fluxes and the role of such habitats in climate change mitigation.



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Counties: **Caithness
and Sutherland**

