

Upland Habitats-1- knowledge recap

Understanding the importance of heather moorland and the management of moorland for conservation

Heather moorlands are a special habitat. They provide the home to many important species of birds, which can only live on heather moorland. They also store valuable carbon within the peat soils.

Starter Questions-

The uplands are defined as land over how many meters above sea level?

What percentage of the UK is heather moorland?

Why are heather moorlands regarded as being so important internationally?

FACT-There are many **different types of upland habitats** including upland native woodland, upland grassland, and upland bogs. Heather moorland (sometimes called upland heath) is rare and can only be maintained as moorland by careful management.

Activity 1

Research each of the following important moorland bird species. Could you identify them by sight?

Red grouse

Curlew

Lapwing

Skylark



Distant heather burning on the North York Moors

Peat Erosion

Heather moorland has peat soils. Healthy peat is wet and spongy. When the moors dry out the peat can wash away in rainstorms and blow away in the wind.

- In the past trees have been planted on the moors, these dry out the soil and because the trees are planted close together (so light cannot reach the ground under them) and the soil is dry, the heather cannot grow.
- In the past the moors have been deliberately drained. This was done to encourage less heather and more grasses to grow. The grass is more palatable for sheep, so more sheep could be grazed in the same area.

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The wetter the better.

Healthy peat is wet and spongy. The waterlogged soils act as a carbon sink (store). Peat bogs can actually 'soak up' the greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, from the atmosphere. This is called carbon sequestration. Dead plants and animals decompose very slowly in peat soils, and the carbon within them is stored in the soil. Greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, contribute to global warming, when they are released into the atmosphere.

Activity 2 consider how gamekeepers and other moorland managers maintain and improve the heather moorland habitat.

1. For each of the 4 management techniques carried out by gamekeepers and moorland managers, list the effects on the moorland plants and the impact on the birds and animals.
2. Extension -investigate what happens when these management techniques are not carried out.

Management technique	What does this do to the moorland plants?	Impact on the moorland animals and birds.
Cold Burning under licence		
Blocking drains		
Cutting and spraying bracken		
Reseeding areas		



Bilsdale in North Yorkshire- showing many different upland habitats.

Further information

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/habitats>

<https://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/nl/discover/moorland>

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/for-kids/facts-about-nature/facts-about-habitats/uplands-mountains-and-moors/>