



"On the Bog" in a sea of cotton grass at Bogtastic, July 2016

A SUMMER OF OUTREACH

BOGTASTIC DAY 2016

On Tuesday the 26th of July Simonsbath became a hub of activity as 450 people visited Bogtastic Day! Held during National Park's week this event co-hosted by the Exmoor Mires Partnership and Exmoor National Park Authority aims to raise awareness and enjoyment of bogs, wildlife and heritage on Exmoor. The day was a huge success and feedback has been unanimously good! One family who had been previously even said they planned their holiday to Exmoor specifically to coincide with Bogtastic Day!

There were many different activities on the bog:

- The infamous Bogstacle Course and Bogtastic Challenge;
- Bog pool dipping with the Environment Agency where they found lots of young newt lava and an abundance of dragonfly nymphs, including one massive Common Hawker specimen;
- The archaeology tent where they were doing peat coring and pollen analysis, making clay coil pots in the style of bronze age beakers and pin your birthday to the tree ring;

Other activities included the bog plant treasure hunt, bog bouncing and having a go at practical conservation by building a peat block.



In the shelter of the meadow at Simonsbath there was a lovely fete atmosphere. The activities were equally diverse: bats, meadows, face painting, stream dipping and crafts. Catering was provided on site by Exford Community Youth Club who did a fantastic BBQ!

The event was sponsored by South West Water and we were kindly given a grant from the Exmoor Trust to go towards travel bursaries for community groups from Exeter and Barnstaple.



Many many thanks to the land manager for allowing Bogtastic to take place and being so helpful in the preparation. Thanks also to the minibus drivers and all the volunteers who gave up their time to ensure the success of the day. We couldn't do it without you all!

UPSTREAM THINKING

By Jos Smith

What new archipelago is this on the rise?
What held garden of future past? Whose
hummocks like island kingdoms are these,
bog cotton, bedstraw and cranberry bushes?

Where men dug linear ditches
to drain the water from upland heath,
women have dammed them with planks and peat.
Now glistening beside each dammed ditch, water

lifts its wings in sphagnum moss.
Something as small as a wish
is permitted to root, to light green
fibres and breathe the peat alive again.

A lizard climbs the rushes with splayed toes,
eyes straining, belly full of young lizards.
Whose tiny sundew are these in clearings,
beaded with glassy lures? Whose black

whortle berries are pricking themselves awake?
For miles around the moor is brim-full,
breath-held and ready for come-what-may.
For many more lizards slinking under grass.

Exmoor Mires Partnership
POET IN RESIDENCE 2016

Jos Smith



Jos Smith is a poet and researcher interested in cultures of landscape and place. He was born in Canterbury and lived in Liverpool, Nottingham and Exeter for a time before settling in Norwich where he works at the University of East Anglia as a lecturer in Contemporary Literature. His first full collection of poetry Subterranea explores the landscapes of the South West and is published by Arc Publications. He is a keen long-distance hiker and paid up member of The Cloud Appreciation Society.

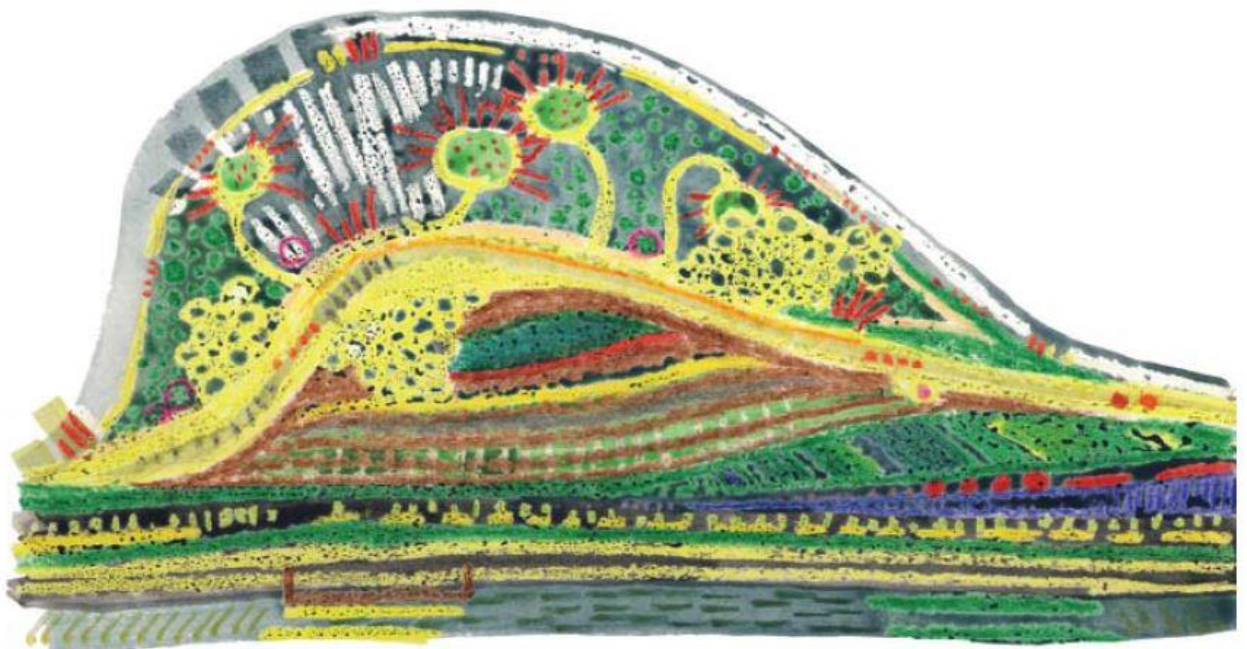


Illustration and design: Rose Ferraby

VEGETATION SURVEYING

MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK

The season started with two very successful training days, at Blackpitts and Pinkery, in early June. We were very fortunate to have expert and enthusiastic guidance from Richard Lindsay, Head of Environmental Research at University of East London, for these two days.

This year's vegetation surveys were completed in record time, 8 sites in 18 days. In all we had 13 volunteers who gave us between 2 and 17 days of their time, a massive total of 521 hours. Some were experienced surveyors who come out year after year, others were new to mire vegetation surveying and this year we had five enthusiastic students from Bristol, Exeter and Montpellier Universities. A huge thank you to them all, especially to Daisy Curtis from the University of Exeter who volunteered to help us for a second year!

The diverse mix of people makes for interesting conversations on the Moor even if the vegetation and the weather isn't up to much. On some days there were as many as nine volunteers along with two members of the Mires team crowded around 3 quadrats, so it is no wonder we got through the work so efficiently. Most of this year's sites were older ones with their condition ranging from botanically rich to *Molinia caerulea* (purple moor grass) dominated. Two more recently restored sites were also surveyed.

The weather was not particularly kind, but one memorable day was spent on Lucott Moor in bright sunshine with fabulous views to the Welsh coast. Expect the results of this year's surveys in the next Newsletter.

Anne & Andy



A grand group of 11 people surveying on a Molinia-dominated Alderman's Barrow Allotment on a dreary July day (AG)

OTHER NEWS

Simonsbath Mire Volunteers: Ditch block repairs on the second Monday of every month, meet 10am at Simonsbath Sawmill. Next meeting 12th September. To get involved and for more info visit the ENPA's Get Involved events calendar: www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/get-involved. Bring waterproof, warm outdoor gear, sturdy footwear and a packed lunch.

Thank you: thanks very much to Victoria Saunal who was an intern with us for 2 months over the summer. She helped with the vegetation surveying and we all very much appreciated her hard work! You are welcome back anytime!

GREENMAN FESTIVAL

In August a collaborative team of staff from the University of Exeter and the Exmoor Mires Partnership headed to the Brecon Beacons to attend the Greenman Festival. Over a four day period the team spoke to over 700 people about catchment management, water, peat and beavers. The catchment management game was a real hit with kids and adults.



With thanks to the many researchers, volunteers, mire landowners and farmers and supporters of the Exmoor Mires Partnership.

As always, please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or if you would like to get involved and please pass this on to friends and anyone who you think might be interested. Do take a look our website and "like" our Facebook page to keep up to date with the constant advances in our knowledge of your peatlands.

The Document Library section of our website contains many articles and reports: www.exmoormires.org.uk

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The Exmoor Mires Partnership is a partnership between the local community, farmers and landowners, the Exmoor National Park Authority, Historic England, Natural England, the Environment Agency and South West Water.