



CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS HERITAGE TRUST

A range of international, national and local nature conservation and landscape designations exist in the UK in order to protect and manage these areas sustainably. Some of these designations include Areas of Outstanding Beauty (AONBs), Ramsar sites, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs) to name a few.

Every week the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust will be explaining some of the designated protected areas within Northern Ireland. This week we look at Ramsar sites and give examples of where they can be found in the Causeway Coast and Glen's area.

Ramsar sites are globally recognized wetland sites of international importance. They are found throughout the world and are named after Ramsar, a town within the Mazandaran province of Iran, where an international convention on Wetlands of international importance was held in 1971. The UK government signed the convention in 1973 and ratified it in 1976.



There are six Ramsar sites within the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust area. These are Belfast Lough, Garron Plateau, Garry Bog, Larne Lough, Lough Beg and Lough Foyle.



Today we look at the Garron Plateau Ramsar site, situated in County Antrim. This is the largest area of intact blanket bog in Northern Ireland and represents one of the best examples of this habitat in the UK. The peat land supports a rich diversity of plant and animal species. It has areas of well developed pools and quaking bogs.

As well as the common bog plants such as cotton grass, bog mosses and bog asphodel there are several rare species of sedges and other interesting plants such as opposite-leaved pondweed, water lobelia and parsley fern. Most importantly, the plateau is the only site in Northern Ireland in which two very rare species are found, bog orchid and marsh saxifrage.



The Garron Plateau is also an important habitat for many breeding birds, such as red grouse, golden plover, dunlin, merlin and hen harrier. As well as being important for birds, the Garron Plateau provides a home for many insects, including the ground beetle *Bembidion geniculatum* which is only found at the Plateau and on one other site in Ireland. The large heath butterfly is also found here, a species restricted to raised and blanket bogs.



Don't miss next week's featured designation...**Special Protection Areas (SPAs)**!