

Some of the most characteristic shrubs and herbs here are marsh tea (*Ledum palustre*), bog bilberry (*Vaccinium uliginosum*), cloudberry (*Rubus chamaemorus*), bog rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), cranberry (*Oxycoccus quadripetalus*), cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) and Drosera, an insectivorous plant.



Blueberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*)

Blueberry has an important role in the ecosystem of pine forest. Wild bees, butterflies and other insects get nectar from its blossoms; many birds and animals eat the berries. NB: it takes 14-16 years before a blueberry bush will blossom and produce berries.



Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*)

Be careful, you may also meet an adder/viper (*Vipera berus*) here.

Many different species of bracket fungus growing on rotten or dried tree trunks feed on wood, decaying also fallen branches, leaves and cones. Without them the underwood of full-drained swamp forest would soon be covered by thick layer of branches and plant residues.

The worst thing that can happen in the bog is forest fire. Earlier the main cause of forest fires was an accidental lightning bolt, but nowadays man is blamed for most cases of forest fire. During warm and dry summer the bog is extremely inflammable and extinguishing the fire here is very complicated due to the soft ground and restricted accessibility. Forest fire destroys the long term biological community, trees will dry and be colonised by pests.

BE CAREFUL WITH FIRE, DO NOT DROP MATCHES OR STUBS!

Aegviidu Nature Centre

<http://loodusegakooos.ee/en>

Phone: +372 604 7212

info.aegviidu@rmk.ee



Drosera /sundew

Drosera rotundifolia

SÕÖRIKSOO NATURE TRAIL

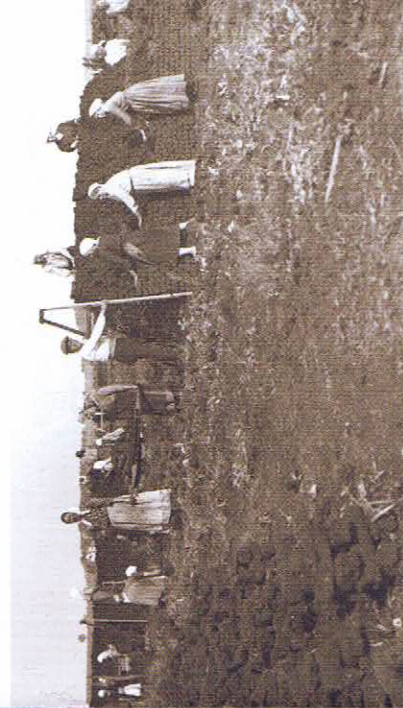
1,5 km boardwalk



Why does Sõõriksoo bog look striped on aerial photo?

More than a 100 years ago this bog was a most productive peat-cutting area in Estonia, giving nearly 50 % of national peat production. Peat was used as fuel and thermal insulation material, also as litter for cattle. At that time, turf was cut by hand. On the aerial photo the light and dark brown stripes mark the formerly peatcutting ditches (light brown on the photo) and ditchbanks (dark brown). Hereafter the bog has naturally regenerated, with its unique ecosystem. Peat, or turf, is an accumulation of partially decayed vegetation, consisting mostly of sphagnum moss, but also other decomposed plant particles. The peat layer is constantly growing. Here, in Sõõriksoo bog, the average thickness of peat layer is 3 m, having piled during the last 2000-3000 years.

While Sphagnum moss is the most indicative species of peat bogs, there are just few other plants which can survive here, with no soil, acidic Ph and almost no nutrition except from above, the atmosphere.



As for birds and animals, woodpeckers have an important role to play in the drained bog. The diet of woodpeckers consist mainly of insects and larvae they drill out from under the bark of old and rotten trees, holding the number of wood-boring insects under control. Their feeding and nesting holes can later be used as nests or shelters by smaller birds or animals. In wintertime the woodpeckers feed on seeds from pine cones. Somebody has peeled off long barkslips from the tree trunks. This was an elk, feeding on bark when other food is hard to find. In wintertime the elks and roe-deers will have some extra food from people to survive bundles of dried branches with leaves and hay. A bog is also an ideal place for wild boars who can not find much food here, but like to take bath in the peat mud. Many different insect species feel at home under the moss layer and between the blueberry shrubs. This suits well for wood grouse (Tetrao urogallus), whose chicks feed mainly on insects and larvae they find on blueberry leaves.