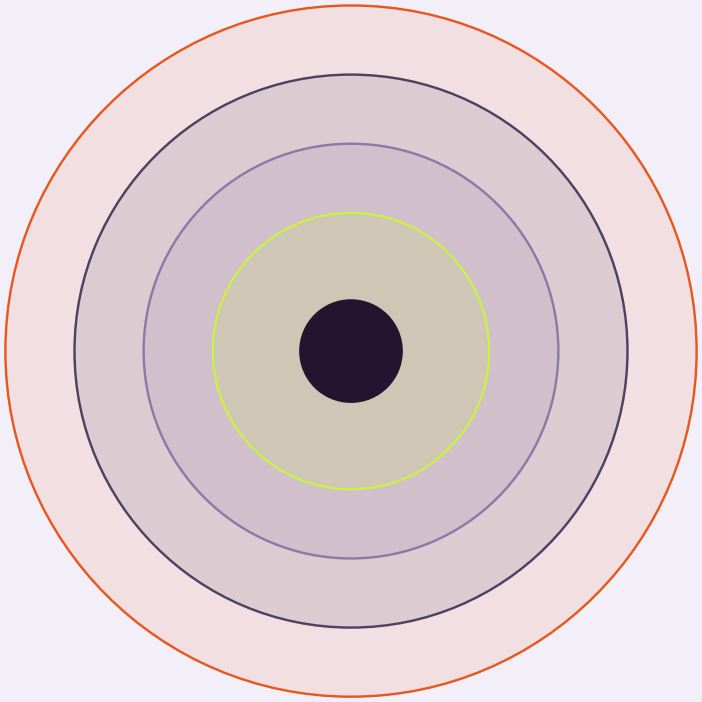


Bogland: The Secret World That Defies Death and Protects Life

A reading of the book by Merritt R. Turetsky (2026)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Bogland: The Secret World That Defies Death and Protects Life, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Merritt R. Turetsky is an ecologist who has spent more than 30 years studying peatlands, with research on northern wetlands, permafrost and fire. Bogland argues that bogs, long written off as useless wasteland, are some of the most powerful places on Earth. In their cold, acidic, waterlogged ground, decay slows so much that dead plants pile up as peat for thousands of years. The book travels from Canada to Borneo, Greece and Greenland, and covers the odd life bogs support, the bodies and objects they preserve, and their long history as hiding places for people fleeing oppression. Its warning is that a healthy bog keeps a vast store of carbon locked away, while draining, burning and digging it for garden peat turns that store into emissions. Turetsky mixes field stories with history and ends with a call to stop buying peat and to protect the bogs that remain.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A bog is a place where death slows down, and that slowness is its power.

Bog water is cold, acidic and short of oxygen, so the microbes that normally rot dead plants barely work. Moss dies and is not fully broken down. It piles up, layer on layer, as peat. Everything else in the book follows from this one fact.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Calling land a wasteland is a choice, not a fact about the land.

For centuries bogs were judged too wet to farm, too dangerous to cross and too untidy to be beautiful. Turetsky's book is a case against that verdict. A place that looks empty can be doing some of the most important work on the planet.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Sphagnum moss builds the very bog it lives in.

Sphagnum holds water like a sponge and makes its surroundings more acidic. That creates conditions few rival plants and few decomposers can handle, so the moss keeps winning and the peat keeps building. The book treats it as the engineer behind the whole system.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A wet bog is a climate ally. A drained one becomes a climate foe.

As long as the peat stays waterlogged, its carbon stays locked away. Drain it and oxygen gets in, decay starts again and the stored carbon leaks out as greenhouse gas. Dry peat can also burn, sometimes for a long time below the surface.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Peat takes millennia to build and can be lost in a single season.

Peat grows by millimetres a year, so a deep bog holds thousands of years of growth. Digging, draining or burning can undo that far faster than any human lifetime could rebuild it. On the timescale that matters to us, peat does not grow back.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A bag of garden peat is a piece of a bog someone dug up.

Turetsky names the use of peat in gardening and landscaping as one of the big threats to bogs. Bogs are drained and stripped so that peat can be bagged and sold. Her first step is simple: buyers refusing it, and telling shops and governments why.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

What a bog keeps, it keeps for thousands of years.

The same conditions that preserve moss preserve almost everything else: wood, cloth, food and the famous bog bodies. Layers of peat also work as an archive of the past, recording what grew nearby and what drifted in on the air.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Land nobody wanted has often sheltered people nobody protected.

Because bogs were hard to enter and hard to search, people fleeing oppression and groups resisting power have used them as refuges. The book tells this human history alongside the ecology, which makes bogs as much a story about people as about plants.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

In the far north, frozen peat is a slow fuse.

Much northern peat sits in permafrost, frozen and stable. Turetsky, whose research covers permafrost, warns that as it thaws, decay restarts and carbon long held in the ground begins to escape. Protecting the bogs we still have matters more because of it.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Read the label on every bag
- [ ] Write your peat-free swap list
- [ ] Start a leaf-mould bag
- [ ] Find a bog you can visit
- [ ] Ask your garden centre for peat-free

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Ask "is this peat-free?" before you buy
- ◯ Keep a compost heap going
- ◯ Stay on the boardwalk

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Read the label on every bag

Go through your shed or balcony and check each bag of compost or potting mix.

If it does not say peat-free, assume it contains peat, and note which ones you will replace.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Write your peat-free swap list

List what you use compost for: sowing seeds, pots, houseplants, beds, mulch.

Next to each, write a peat-free swap, such as wood-fibre or bark-based compost, coir, leaf mould or home compost, and keep the list on your phone.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Start a leaf-mould bag

Fill a bin bag with damp autumn leaves, poke a few holes in it and leave it somewhere out of the way.

In a year or two you will have free mulch and soil improver that no bog paid for.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Find a bog you can visit

Look up a peatland nature reserve within a day's trip, ideally one with a boardwalk.

Put a date in your calendar to walk it and look closely at the moss.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Ask your garden centre for peat-free

Send one short message to the shop where you buy compost.

Ask what peat-free products they stock and say you will buy them instead of peat.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Ask "is this peat-free?" before you buy

Make it a reflex for compost, bedding plants and houseplants, which are often grown in peat.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Keep a compost heap going

Add kitchen scraps and garden waste each week and turn the heap now and then.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Stay on the boardwalk

On every bog visit, keep to paths and boardwalks.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
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December 2026

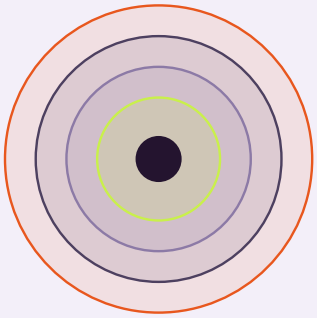
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



A bog turns slow death into deep time. All it asks of us is to leave it wet.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER MERRITT R. TURETSKY