

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON 24 MARCH 1995

COUNTY: AVON SITE NAME: TICKENHAM, NAILSEA AND KENN MOORS

DISTRICT: WOODSPRING

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, (as amended).

Local Planning Authority: AVON COUNTY COUNCIL, Woodspring District Council

National Grid Reference: ST 440700 Area: 129.4 (ha.) 319.7 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 172 1:10,000: ST 46 NW, ST 47 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): – Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1995 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Tickenham, Nailsea and Kenn Moors form part of the Avon Levels and Moors, an extensive area of low-lying agricultural land situated to the north of the Mendip Hills. The soils of the area vary considerably. In the west clays of the Allerton and Wentloog Series occur, whereas to the east peat soils of the Sedgemoor and Godney Series predominate. The peat soils, however, are very shallow and in some areas have become mixed with underlying clays largely as a consequence of past cultivation.

The Moors are drained by a network of large rhynes and smaller field ditches. These act as wet fences and are important for watering the livestock, largely cattle, which graze the area during the summer months.

The variety of soil types, together with the past and present management practices, has resulted in a wide range of rhyne and ditch types.

Many of the Internal Drainage Board maintained and regularly managed field ditches support exceptionally rich plant communities. Open water species include Common and Thread-leaved water-crowfoot *Ranunculus aquatilis* and *R. trichophyllus*, Frogbit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*, Horned Pondweed *Zannichellia palustris*, Unbranched Bur-reed *Sparganium emersum* and Small Pondweed *Potamogeton berchtoldii*. Locally uncommon species, such as Water-violet *Hottonia palustris*, Greater Bladderwort *Utricularia vulgaris* and the liverwort *Riccia fluitans* are frequent and the nationally scarce Hairlike and Fen Pondweeds *Potamogeton trichoides* and *P. coloratus* and Whorled Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum verticillatum* also occur.

Many emergent species are also present and Branched Bur-reed *Sparganium erectum*, Water Dock *Rumex hydrolapthum*, Tubular Water-dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa*, Arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia* are all common and the prominent Flowering rush *Butomus umbellatus* is also present. In some places Sea Club-rush *Scirpus maritimus* and Grey Club-rush *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* also occur and this may indicate a residual brackish influence from past inundation by the sea.

Some of the less frequently dredged field ditches are dominated by a single emergent species and Reed Sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima* and Common Reed *Phragmites australis* both form extensive stands.

Many of the ditch and rhyne banks also support a rich bank flora with Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, Brookweed *Samolus valerandi*, Creeping-Jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*, Skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata* and Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus* all being present.

Associated with these rich plant communities is an equally diverse invertebrate fauna, and the rhyne and ditches are known to support large numbers of aquatic Coleoptera, Molluscs and Odonata.

Exceptional populations of Coleoptera occur with at least 12 nationally scarce species and two nationally rare (RDB3*) species. These include Britain's largest water beetle the Great Silver Water Beetle *Hydrophilus piceus*, a species largely confined to the grazing marshes of southern England.

Good populations of Odonata also occur and the nationally scarce Hairy Dragonfly *Brachytron pratense* and Variable Damselfly *Coenagrion pulchellum* both breed on the Moors.

Less conspicuous invertebrates are also well represented. To date over thirty species of Molluscs have been recorded, including the nationally rare (RDB3) pea mussel *Pisidium pseudosphaerium*. The nationally scarce soldier fly *Odontomyia ornata*, has also been recorded from a number of ditches.

*RDB3: species listed as RARE in British Red Data Book 2 (Insects).