

COUNTY: SOMERSET      SITE NAME: RINGDOWN

DISTRICT: TAUNTON DEANE

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

Local Planning Authority: TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL, Somerset County Council

National Grid Reference: ST 178155      Area: 4.0 (ha.) 9.88 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 193      1:10,000: ST 11 NE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1990      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The site is located on a valley side in the Blackdown Hills where outcrops of both Cretaceous Upper Greensand and underlying Triassic Keuper Marls occur. A seepage line at the base of the Upper Greensand ensures the area is always very wet and the Greensand aquifer results in the groundwater being highly acidic.

The vegetation consists largely of a mire community with a patchy bryophyte cover, particularly of *Sphagnum palustre*, *S. papillosum*, *S. subnitens* and *Aulacomnium palustre*. The most abundant grass is Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* with sedges forming a significant part of the sward, the most frequent of which are Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea*, Common Yellow-sedge *C. demissa*, Flea Sedge *C. pulicaris*, Star Sedge *C. echinata*, Tawny Sedge *C. hostiana*, Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and Many-stalked Spike-Rush *Eleocharis multicaulis*. The dwarf shrub species Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* are also frequent but the grazing intensity prevents them and Purple Moor-grass becoming dominant species. Many herb species are found including Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, Heath Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, Marsh Violet *Viola palustris*, Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, Pale Butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and Lesser Skullcap *Scutellaria minor*. Also present are two other species which are very restricted in South West Britain, White Beak-sedge *Rhynchospora alba* and Dioecious Sedge *Carex dioica*. This site is the only known location for the latter in Somerset.

An area of slightly less acidic nature on the Keuper Marls supports a different community. Here Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus* is abundant and associated herb species include Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, Betony *Stachys officinalis*,

Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca* and Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*. Small areas of Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and Gorse *Ulex europaeus* add diversity to the site.

Downy Birch *Betula pubescens*, Silver Birch *B. pendula* and Grey Willow *Salix cinerea* woodland also occurs. The bog moss *Sphagnum palustre* is abundant here and Greater Tussock-sedge *Carex paniculata*, Smooth-stalked Sedge *C. laevigata* and Remote Sedge *C. remota* also occur.

A colony of the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria selene* is found here.