

COUNTY: SOMERSET

SITE NAME: WEST MOOR

DISTRICT: SOUTH SOMERSET

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

Local Planning Authority: SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL, South Somerset District Council

National Grid Reference: ST 420220

Area: 213.0 (ha.) 526.3 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 193

1:10,000: ST 42 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
New site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

West Moor is part of the extensive grazing marsh grasslands and ditch systems of the Somerset Levels and floors. The site lies on Midelney and Fladbury clays, just south of the confluence of the Rivers Parrett and Isle.

The moor is an important withy-growing area with remaining areas in permanent neutral grassland. The grasslands are mainly species-poor Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*/Marsh Foxtail *Alopecurus geniculatus* inundation types. Wetter swards often contain tussocks of Soft Rush *Juncus effusus* and Tufted Hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*. Some moderately herb-rich swards remain which include Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, Tubular Water-dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*, sweet-grasses *Glyceria* spp. and Greater Pond-sedge *Carex riparia*.

The site contains some of the most diverse aquatic plant communities in the country. IDB rhynes often have a rich aquatic flora with Frogbit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*, Ivy-leaved Duckweed *Lemna trisulca*, Greater Duckweed *L. polyrrhiza* and the local Rootless Duckweed *Wolffia arrhiza*. Field ditches, particularly between withy beds, may be hand cleaned resulting in outstandingly rich communities. Many ditches contain dominant stands of Flowering Rush *Butomus umbellatus*, and Water Parsnip *Sium latifolium* together with Water Violet *Hottonia palustris*, Fan-leaved Water-crowfoot *Ranunculus circinatus*, Small Pondweed *Potamogeton berchtoldii*, Hairlike Pondweed *P. trichoides*, and the uncommon Whorled Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum verticillatum*.

A rich invertebrate fauna, with many nationally and locally rare species is associated with the botanical diversity of the ditches. This fauna includes the rare soldier fly *Odontomyia ornata*, two notable water beetles *Rhantus grapii* and *Hydaticus transversalis*, a notable terrestrial beetle *Donacia dentata* and the dragonflies *Brachytron pratense* and *Coenagrion pulchellum*. West Moor is the only known Somerset site for the nationally rare weevil *Bagous nodulosus*.

Extensive winter floods occur regularly, attracting flocks of Wigeon *Anas penelope* and Pochard *Aythya ferina* together with occasional small herds of Bewick's Swan *Cygnus bewickii*. Wet conditions in winter provide suitable feeding grounds for Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina* and Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*.

Other regular winter visitors include Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* and Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*.

Lapwing, Snipe, Redshank *Tringa totanus* and Curlew *Numenius arquata* breed on the moist ground in spring, with Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* and Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* breeding on the watercourses. The withy beds and emergent bankside vegetation support regionally important breeding populations of Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*, Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* and Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*.

Otters *Lutra lutra* are known to frequent the secluded watercourses and withy beds of West Moor.