

COUNTY: SUFFOLK            SITE NAME: SPRAT'S WATER AND MARSHES

DISTRICT: WAVENEY

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

Local Planning Authority: WAVENEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TM 507921            Area: 55.5 (ha.) 137.2 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 134            1:10,000: TM 59 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1979            Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified Under 1981 Act): 1986            Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Much of the site is owned by the Suffolk Trust for Nature Conservation. The remaining area is held by the Trust under an annual management agreement.

Reasons for Notification:

Sprat's Water and Marshes are situated in the Lower Waveney Valley and comprise areas of spring-fed mixed fen, open water, alder carr and wet grazing marsh on deep peat. The fen community is of a type that is typical of Broadland but which is rarely found elsewhere in Suffolk. Maintenance of high summer water levels together with seasonal grazing and reed cutting have led to the development of a very rich flora which includes several uncommon species. The site is also Important for breeding birds.

The tall fen communities of Sprat's Water and White Cast Marshes are dominated largely by Reed *Phragmites australis* and Saw Sedge *Cladium mariscus*. Characteristic plants include lesser Reedmace *Typha angustifolia*, Greater Spearwort *Ranunculus lingua*, Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and the uncommon Milk Parsley *Peucedanum palustre*. Other unusual species include Cowbane *Cicuta virosa*, Marsh Sow-thistle *Sonchus palustris* and Marsh Pea *Lathyrus palustris*. In drier parts of the fen, Sweet Reed-grass *Glyceria maxima* becomes abundant.

Wet grazing marshes link the two areas of fen. These show a gradation from neutral to marshy grassland and are dominated by Yorkshire Fog, Meadow Fescue and Tufted Hair-grass with a variety of rushes and sedges. Ragged Robin, Cuckoo Flower, and Quaking Grass *Briza media* are common, whilst more notable species include Adder's Tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and Marsh Pea.

A well-developed system of spring-fed drainage dykes serve the grazing marshes. These support a varied aquatic and fringing vegetation including Spiked Water Milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum*, Rigid Hornwort *Ceratophyllum demersum*, Frogbit

*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*, Arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia*, Water Soldier *Stratiotes aloides*, Flowering Rush *Butomus umbellatus* and Pondweeds *Potamogeton spp.* Shallow ponds have developed from former peat workings at Sprat's Water and contain abundant bladderwort and hornwort.

Alder carr and scattered sallow fringe much of Sprat's Water and occur in isolated patches on White Cast Marshes. The ground flora is typical of wet woodland and includes opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*.