

Site Name: Red Lodge Heath **County:** Suffolk

District: Forest Heath

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 substituted by Schedule 9 to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Local Planning Authority: Forest Heath District Council, Suffolk County Council

National Grid reference: TL697700 **Area:** 20.75ha

Ordnance Survey Sheet: 154 **1:10,000:** TL 66NE, TL 67SE

Notification Date: 22 March 2005

Reasons for notification:

Red Lodge Heath SSSI supports a nationally important assemblage of invertebrates, chiefly associated with dry grassland and wet woodland with ponds, including a nationally important population of the nationally rare five-banded tailed digger wasp *Cerceris quinquefasciata*. The site also supports a nationally important assemblage of rare plants.

General description:

Red Lodge Heath SSSI is a mosaic of dry acid grassland, chalk grassland, lichen heath and wet woodland with ponds. The chalk grassland is intensively rabbit-grazed short turf in places. Typical plants here include sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, dove's-foot cranesbill *Geranium molle*, rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus* and yarrow *Achillea millefolium*. Where the soils are chalky but less intensively grazed there is grassland dominated by false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* but containing a chalk-rich flora, including sheep's fescue and lady's bedstraw, small scabious *Scabiosa columbaria*, greater knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa* and wild parsnip *Pastinaca sativa*. The chalk grasslands are the most species-rich for plants.

The acid grassland is also intensively rabbit-grazed short turf in places. Typical species include sheep's fescue, bird's foot *Ornithopus perpusillus*, sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella* and mouse-ear hawkweed *Hieracium pilosella*. There are patches of bare, disturbed soil within the grasslands which are very valuable habitat features for the rare invertebrates and the rare plants.

The centre and south of the site is an old sand and gravel quarry last worked in the 1950s and abandoned without restoration, so the topography consists of a series of hollows in an artificial valley. The hollows contain water, and the valley sides have grown up into secondary woodland of willow *Salix* sp., birch *Betula* sp. and oak *Quercus* sp.

Assemblage of invertebrates

The nationally important invertebrate community is an assemblage, chiefly associated with dry grassland and wet woodland with ponds, with aculeate Hymenoptera (bees,

wasps and ants) and Coleoptera (beetles) particularly well represented. Within the invertebrate community is a nationally important population of the nationally rare five-banded tailed digger wasp *Cerceris quinquefasciata*. This is a medium-sized yellow and black solitary digger wasp found nesting in bare sand in the north of the site, and on sparsely vegetated slopes in the west of the heath. Adults are found flying throughout the dry grasslands. Its distinctive cleptoparasite (a parasite which feeds on the food reserves of another insect) the nationally rare cuckoo-wasp *Hedychrum niemelai* is also numerous, and rarely found elsewhere in the Breckland, indicating that there has been long continuity of the populations of both species at Red Lodge Heath.

There are five nationally rare Red Data Book aculeate Hymenoptera species: the digger wasps *Cerceris quinquefasciata* and *Podalonia affinis*, the mining bee *Andrena hattorfiana*, the cuckoo-wasp *Hedychrum niemelai* and the cuckoo-bee *Nomada argentata*; and 17 nationally scarce aculeate Hymenoptera species: the mining bees *Colletes marginatus*, *Lasioglossum quadrinotatum*, *L. malachurum*, *Sphecodes reticulatus*, *S. crassus*, *Andrena marginata*, *A. minutuloides*, *A. tibialis*, *A. nigriceps* and *Dasypoda altercator*, the social wasp *Dolichovespula media*, the cuckoo bee *Sphecodes longulus*, the sphecid wasp *Oxybelus argentatus*, the yellow-faced bees *Hylaeus cornutus* and *H. signatus*, the ruby-tailed cuckoo-wasps *Chrysis helleni* and the cuckoo-bee *Nomada flavopicta*. The aculeate Hymenoptera are all chiefly associated with the dry grassland areas of the sites. In addition, the assemblage includes 100 commoner species of bees, wasps and ants. The site supports the only recent Suffolk records for the mining bee *Andrena minutuloides*, the yellow-faced bee *Hylaeus cornutus*, the cuckoo-bee *Nomada argentata*, the spider-hunting wasp *Anoplius concinnus* and the digger wasp *Ectemnius rubicola*.

Of the Coleoptera that are chiefly associated with the dry grassland areas of the site (including areas of open and disturbed ground within the dry grasslands), there are five Red Data Book species: the weevils *Apion rubiginosum* and *Bruchela rufipes*, the dead wood beetle *Dryophilus anobioides*, the smut beetle *Olibrus flavicornis* and the tumbling flower beetle *Mordellistena parvula*; and 22 nationally scarce species: the dead wood beetle *Cryptolestes spartii*, the click beetle *Cardiophorus asellus*, the flea beetles *Longitarsus quadriguttatus*, *L. tabidus*, *L. dorsalis* and *Mantura chrysanthemii*, the weevils *Cionus longicollis*, *Ceutorhynchus atomus*, *C. pulvinatus*, *C. resedae*, *Otiorhynchus raucus*, *Mogulones geographicus*, *Baris picicornis*, *Miarus graminis* and *Trichosirocalus barnevillei*, the ground beetles *Harpalus pumilus (vernalis)* and *Calathus ambiguus*, the beetles *Olibrus millefolii* and *O. pygmaeus*, blue rove beetle *Ocyopus ophthalmicus*, Adonis' ladybird *Adonia variegata* and the small ladybird *Scymnus schmidti*.

The invertebrate assemblage includes a further five species chiefly associated with dry grassland, of which two are nationally rare Red Data Book species: grey carpet moth *Lithostege griseata* and the snail-killing fly *Pherbellia knutsoni*; and three are nationally scarce: the groundbug *Graptopeltus lynceus*, and the hoppers *Macrosteles quadripunctulatus* and *Scleroracus decumanus*.

In addition to the dry grassland invertebrates described above, a number of species of Coleoptera are chiefly associated with the areas of wet woodland with ponds in the centre and south of the site. These include four Red data Book species: the flower beetle *Mordellistena neuwaldeggiana* and the featherwing beetles *Microptilium palustre*, *M. pulchellum* and *Ptiliolum marginatum*; and 12 nationally scarce species:

the water beetles *Cercyon bifenestratus*, *C. convexiusculus*, *C. sternalis* and *Scarodytes halensis*, the leaf-rolling weevils *Rhynchites longiceps* and *R. tomentosus*, the ground beetle *Anthracus consputus*, and the rove beetles *Carpelimus obesus*, *Datomicra zosteræ*, *Dochmonota clancula* and *Philhygra (Atheta) hygrobia*.

Assemblage of rare plants

The assemblage of rare plants includes the nationally rare smooth rupturewort *Herniaria glabra* and Breckland thyme *Thymus serpyllum*, and the nationally scarce bearded fescue *Vulpia ciliata ambigua*. Smooth rupturewort is a short-lived, mat-forming perennial which grows in compacted sandy or gravelly soil, often with some chalk or limestone fragments. Breckland thyme is confined in Britain to the Breckland and is a slow-growing mat-forming perennial. Bearded fescue is a winter annual grass found on disturbed sandy chalky soil, typically beside roads and tracks.