

COUNTY: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE **SITE NAME:** BUGBROOKE MEADOWS

District: South Northamptonshire

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

Local Planning Authority: South Northamptonshire District Council

National Grid Reference: SP 672586

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 152 **1:10,000:** SP 65 NE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1989 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 9.8 ha 24.2 ac

Other Information: This is a new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification

The site contains a group of low lying meadows alongside the River Nene which have escaped drainage and improvement. They tend to flood in winter and often remain wet well in to the growing season. As a result they support a range of damp grassland communities which are remarkably diverse and rich in species. Not only is this the only remaining example of its type in the Nene Valley but is probably unique in the county. The old hedgerows, drainage features and a short section of the River Nene form an integral part of the site which is managed as in the past by a combination of grazing and intermittent hay cutting.

The grassland of the crested dog's-tail-marsh marigold *Cynosurus cristatus*-*Caltha palustris* flood pasture type - grading through meadow foxtail-great burnet *Alopecurus pratensis*-*Sanguisorba officinalis* to crested dog's-tail-knapweed *Cynosurus cristatus*-*Centaurea nigra* on the drier areas. In some wetter places the creeping bent-marsh foxtail *Agrostis stolonifera*-*Alopecurus geniculatus* inundation community occurs.

Wetter areas, particularly along springlines and ditches, are dominated by hard rushes *Juncus inflexus*, jointed rush *J. articulatus* and greater pond sedge *Carex riparia*, with marsh marigold, common spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris*, great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* and ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*. The meadows are very species-rich and contain a number of species which are rare in the county, these include: sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, common cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, adder's tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, lesser spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, marsh arrow-grass *Triglochin palustris* and marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*.

The old hedges surrounding the meadow are important features in themselves both historically and as a wildlife habitat. Most of the common trees and shrubs are present including blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, crab apple *Malus sylvestris*, both species of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and *C. laevigata*, spindle *Euonymus europaeus* and buckthorn *Rhamnus catharticus*.

Some of the adjoining fields are also very interesting botanically, but although still part of the same management unit are not as species-rich as the area selected.