

COUNTY: SOMERSET

SITE NAME: SOUTHLAKE MOOR

DISTRICT: SEDGEMOOR, YEOVIL

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

Local Planning Authority: SEDGEMOOR DISTRICT COUNCIL, Yeovil District Council, Somerset County Council

National Grid Reference: ST 370300

Area: 196.1 (ha.) 484.6 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 182 and 193

1:10,000: ST 33 SE, ST 32 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Description:

Southlake Moor forms part of the extensive grazing marsh and ditch system of the Somerset Levels and Moors. The land lies below 7m ODN in the basin of the River Parrett, which forms part of the boundary of the site.

The soils are mainly of the Midelney Series alluvial clay over peat soil with a small area of the more silty Newchurch 2 Series.

The water table is high throughout the greater part of the year -- the extensive system of rhynes and ditches being penned at a high level in summer. Southlake Moor is unusual in that, when conditions in the River Parrett are suitable, it may be deliberately flooded in winter by means of a sluice in the river floodbank.

The majority of the moor is permanent grassland with a wide range of grassland types resulting from varying topographic and management conditions. There is considerable variation in species composition, although Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Meadow Fescue *Festuca pratensis* are constant species. Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, Meadow Rue *Thalictrum flavum* and Pepper Saxifrage *Silaum silaus* are occasionally present. Drier fields contain Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* whilst the larger number of wetter fields comprise the Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*, water-dropworts *Oenanthe* spp. and rush *Juncus* spp. types. A few fields are dominated by Common Spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris*.

Some 96 species of aquatic and bankside vascular plant species have been recorded from Southlake Moor. A range of ditch cleaning methods are employed (including a considerable proportion of hand clearance work), encouraging diverse aquatic communities which include a good submergent flora. IDB ditches are commonly dominated by Frogbit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* and both waterweeds *Elodea canadensis* and *E. nuttallii*. Six species of pondweed are found including the local Hairlike Pondweed *Potamogeton trichoides* which is abundant. The emergent flora is rich, with Water Parsnip *Sium latifolium*, Mare's-tail *Hippuris vulgaris* and Water Violet *Hottonia palustris*. A diverse bankside vegetation includes many local species, such as Bladder Sedge *Carex vesicaria*, Flowering Rush *Butomus umbellatus* and Skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata*.

The aquatic invertebrate fauna includes the notable Variable Coenagrion *Coenagrion pulchellum* and Hairy Dragonfly *Brachytron pratense* together with two local

species, the mollusc *Gyraulus laevis* and the bug *Sigara semistriata*. Terrestrial invertebrates are less well known but include the rare soldier flies *Odontomyia ornata* and *Stratiomys furcata*.

When the moor is flooded, large numbers of wildfowl may be present; with up to 22,000 Wigeon *Anas penelope*, 250 Bewick's Swan *Cygnus bewickii* and good numbers of Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Teal *Anas crecca* and Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*. When floods recede, large flocks of Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* return to feed; with Dunlin *Calidris alpina* and Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* often present. Much of the moor remains moist into the spring and early summer, providing suitable conditions for breeding Snipe, Redshank *Tringa totanus* and Lapwing.

Regular signs of the Otter *Lutra lutra* are to be seen on the muddy banks of the River Parrett. The ditches on the east side of the site contain a population of the Palmate Newt *Triturus helveticus*.