

County: North Yorkshire **Site Name:** Askham Bog

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

Local Planning Authority: Selby District Council

National Grid Reference: SE 570480

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 105 **1:10,000:** SE 54 NE

Area: 44.7 (ha) 110.7 (ac)

First Notified: 1961*

Date of Revision: 1984

Description:

Askham Bog is the remnant of a valley-mire which formed between two ridges of glacial moraine in the Vale of York just southwest of the City. Base-rich ground-water draining the moraines has led to the development of a rich-fen community which demonstrates stages in seral succession to fen woodland. In the central areas there is a poor-fen community, thought to represent incipient raised-bog, where vegetation has grown above the influence of the ground-water and conditions have become acidic through the leaching action of rain-water and the growth of bog mosses *Sphagnum* spp.

The present habitats are considered to be secondary, raised-bog having largely replaced the original fen before peat-cutting in the Middle Ages brought the vegetation back within the influence of base-rich ground-water with the consequent reversion to fen conditions.

The majority of the site consists of birch *Betula pubescens* and oak *Quercus robur* woodland with alder *Alnus glutinosa* at the dyke margins. There is extensive willow carr *Salix cinerea*, and the shrub layer also includes alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus* and bog myrtle *Myrica gale*. The open fen communities are very rich in flowering plants such as meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, common meadow rue *Thalictrum flavum*, yellow loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris*, common marsh bedstraw *Galium palustre* and woody nightshade *Solanum dulcamara*. Sedges are particularly well represented and include fibrous tussock-sedge *Carex appropinquata*, elongated sedge *C. elongata* and great fen-sedge *Cladium mariscus*. The site is also noted for the occurrence of royal fern *Osmunda regalis* and marsh fern *Thelypteris thelypteroides*. More acidic elements of the ground flora include broad buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata*, narrow buckler-fern *D. carthusiana*, purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and bog mosses *Sphagnum fimbriatum*, *S. squarrosum* and *S. palustre*. In addition to the peatland habitats there is grassland along the northern and southern margins which has several species of interest such as adder's-tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum* and early marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata*, and the dykes are rich in aquatic plants, in particular the water violet *Hottonia palustris*.

The site is renowned for its insect fauna which includes the scarce beetles *Dromius sigma* and *Agabus undulatus* and the fen square-spot moth *Diarsia florida*.

Reference:

Fitter, A. and Smith C., editors, (1979). A Wood in Ascum. Ebor Press, York.

Other Information:

1. The importance of this site is such that although not included in 'A Nature Conservation Review' at the time of its publication, it has nevertheless since been recognised as an integral part of the national peatland series listed in that volume.
2. During the 1983 revision the boundary has been extended.
3. Part of the site is managed as a nature reserve by the Yorkshire Naturalists' Trust.

*Under Section 23 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949.