

COUNTY: DORSET SITE NAME: RADIPOLE LAKE

DISTRICT: WEYMOUTH AND PORTLAND

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

Local Planning Authority: WEYMOUTH AND PORTLAND BOROUGH COUNCIL,
Dorset County Council

National Grid Reference: SY 672805 Area: 96.4 (ha.) 238.2 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 194 1:10,000: SY 67 NE, 68 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1952 Date of Last Revision: 1977

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Most of the site is leased to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and managed as a nature reserve.

Site area increased.

Reasons for Notification:

The former estuary of the River Wey, this site comprises a variety of wetland habitats of great importance for birds as a breeding, wintering and passage site. The lake and reed beds have formed since the exclusion of tidal water in the 1920's, though areas of relict saltmarsh remain. Scrub is an important additional habitat and wet grassland on alluvium over Oxford Clay is also present.

Extensive beds of Reed *Phragmites australis* have developed both as young and vigorous pure stands and, on slightly higher land, in a mixture with other marsh species including Reed Canary Grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, Pond Sedge *Carex riparia* and rushes *Juncus* spp. Patches of saltmarsh – probably originally islands in the estuary – are an interesting feature and present greater botanical diversity. There is a coarse turf dominated by Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, in which the rushes *Juncus maritimus* and *J. gerardii* are frequent. Sea Club Rush *Scirpus maritimus*, Sea Aster *Aster tripolium* and Sea Milkwort *Glaux maritima* are also typical of this saltmarsh element.

The northern and western fringes of the site have most scrub, with Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Sallow *Salix caprea* being the principal species. The river edge and flood meadows support various wetland-marsh plants.

More than 50 bird species breed at this site, including a very large population of Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and rare species such as Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* and Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*. The reedbeds support important pre-migration roosts of Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*, House Martin *Delichon urbica*, Swallow *Hirundo rustica* and Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*. There is also a very large passage of Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* in early autumn. The site is

important for wintering wildfowl with the regular flock of Shoveler *Anas clypeata* of particular note. Radipole Lake is also rich in invertebrates. Butterflies and dragonflies are well represented, and more than 450 species of moths have been recorded. The spider *Argiope bruennichi* is locally frequent.