

Notification date: 20 October 1986

COUNTY: DERBYSHIRE

SITE NAME: COMBS RESERVOIR

DISTRICT: HIGH PEAK

SITE REF: 15 WMK

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

Local Planning Authority: DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, High Peak Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SK 038795

Area: 32.1 (ha.) 79.3 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 119

1:10,000: SK 07 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1963

Date of Last Revision: 1981

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986

Date of last Revision: –

Other Information:

Site boundary alteration (extension & reduction).

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Combs Reservoir is situated to the south east of Whaley Bridge. Built in the 19th century as a canal feeder reservoir it covers an area of some 30 ha. In periods of drought it has an extensive drawdown zone which exposes large areas of mud. The reservoir is recharged to full capacity in the winter.

The site is one of a very few sites in Britain which periodically support an unusual community of short-lived mosses and liverworts. These 'ephemeral bryophyte' communities are characteristic of the muddy draw-down zone of a few reservoirs and ponds, but are well documented only at Combs and at one other, nearby, site.

The most characteristic species is the rare moss *Physcomitrium sphaericum* which is known at only a very few other localities. It was first recorded at Combs Reservoir in 1893 and has reappeared several times since 1947, when summer droughts have produced a suitable muddy substrate for this rare community which includes other short-lived mosses such as *Physcomitrella patens*, *Pseudephemerum nitidum*, *Ephemerum serratum*, and the liverworts *Ricca glauca* and *Fossombronia wondraczekii*.

The plant communities of the reservoir margins are also of interest and provide the only known county site for the rare mudwort *Limosella aquatica*.

The combination of woodland, grassland and water-margin habitats support over 40 species of breeding birds. Waterbirds include great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus* and little ringed plover *Charadrius dubius* whilst the marshy grasslands attract snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*.