

File ref: NY 23/2

**County:** Cumbria      **Site Name:** Over Water

**District:** Allerdale

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Lake District Special Planning Board

**National Grid Reference:** NY 25130    **Area:** 29.3 (ha)    72.4 (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 89, 90

**1:10,000:** NY 23 NW, NY 23 SW,  
NY 23 NE, NY 23 SE

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** 1965

**Date of Last Revision:** 1975

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1984

**Date of Last Revision:** 1984

**Other Information:**

1. The boundary of the site has been extended at this revision.
2. The site lies within the Lake District National Park.

**Reasons for Notification:**

Over Water lies 12 km north of Keswick and to the north west of the Skiddaw massif, at an altitude of just under 200 m OD. This small lake with an area of 22 ha has a moderately nutrient-rich (meso-eutrophic) water chemistry, comparable to that of the much larger and lower level of lakes of Bassenthwaite and Derwent Water. In comparison with the other smaller lakes and tarns in West Cumbria, Over Water is unique in having such nutrient rich water and a high species diversity. Around the lake are a number of other rich habitats ranging from wet grassland, through fen and willow carr to closed canopy woodland and these add considerably to the interest of the site.

The aquatic flora of Over Water includes six species of pondweed *Potamogeton* spp., yellow and white water-lilies *Nuphar lutea* and *Nymphaea alba* and two rarer species, autumnal water-starwort *Callitriche hermaphroditica* and six-stamened waterwort *Elatine hexandra*. The latter, although generally uncommon, is abundant here. These species all reflect the rather nutrient rich water chemistry. There are, however, a number of species present which are typical of less nutrient rich water, for example quillwort *Isoetes lacustris* and alternate water-milfoil *Myriophyllum alterniflorum*, as well as others including

shoreweed *Littorella uniflora* which occur in water-bodies across the whole range of nutrient status.

Parts of the lake are fringed by emergent vegetation in which common clubrush *Schoenoplectus lacustris* is the most common constituent although other areas are dominated by common reed *Phragmites australis*. Other species in the emergent vegetation include bottle sedge *Carex rostrata* and water horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*. Along the northern shore there is no continuous zone of emergent vegetation but common spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris* is locally dominant and towards the west becomes co-dominant with yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus*.

Around the lake, areas of wet grassland and fen grade into willow scrub and closed canopy woodland. This is especially well demonstrated in the south-west corner of the lake where the zone of emergent species, mainly bottle sedge, water horsetail and branched and least bur-reeds *Sparganium erectum* and *S. minimum* passes into a narrow herb-rich zone on deeper organic soils with yellow iris, water mint *Mentha aquatica*, marsh hawksbeard *Crepis paludosa*, hemlock water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* and purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, which in turn merges into willow carr and woodland.

These areas of woodland are generally dominated by either birch and alder or birch and willow. Other tree species occur in small numbers and include Scots pine, wych elm, rowan and oak. The ground flora varies with soil wetness, the most interesting communities being on the damper soils where they consist of shade tolerant fen species such as skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and lady fern *Athyrium filix-femina*.

The fauna of the site is also of some interest and includes the uncommon cladoceran crustacean *Illyocryptus acutifrons* which only occurs in a few of the smaller lakes and in none of the tarns of the Lake District. In addition Over Water is of local importance for its population of breeding birds which include great crested grebe, grey heron and reed warbler, and of wintering wildfowl these including little grebe, wigeon, tufted duck, pochard, goldeneye, goosander and whooper swan.