

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: BREYDON WATER

DISTRICT: Great Yarmouth

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

Local Planning Authority: Great Yarmouth Borough Council

National Grid Reference: TG 500075

Area: 506.5 (ha) 1251.5 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 134

1:10,000: TG 40 NE, SE, TG 50 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site; the majority has been established as a Local Nature Reserve since 1968.

Reasons for Notification:

Breydon Water is an inland tidal estuary at the mouth of the River Yare and its confluence with the rivers Bure and Waveney. Extensive areas of mud are exposed at low tide and these form the only intertidal flats occurring on the east coast of Norfolk. Large numbers of wildfowl and waders are attracted to an abundant food supply when on passage and during the winter months. Several wintering wildfowl reach nationally important population levels and the site occupies a key position on the east coast for these species and for migrating birds. Rare species are regularly recorded. There is also considerable botanical interest with small areas of saltmarsh, reedbeds and brackish water communities in the surrounding borrow dykes. The invertebrate fauna is rich and includes one scarce species of snail.

The mudflats are characterised by growths of green algae *Enteromorpha sp.* and *Ulva sp.* and two uncommon species of Eel-grass *Zostera marina* and *Z. noltii*. These plants, together with an abundant invertebrate fauna, attract large numbers of ducks and waders to feed in the estuary at the appropriate seasons. There are nationally important wintering flocks of Wigeon (winter maximum 4,500 birds) and Shelduck (1,000) and an internationally important flock of Bewick's Swans (120). Other notable wintering wildfowl include Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Pintail, White-fronted Goose and Pink-footed Goose. Large flocks of waders are also present with a total winter maximum of 3–6,000 birds. The most numerous species are Knot, Dunlin, Redshank and Ringed Plover. Several uncommon species are recorded with some regularity, the most noteworthy being Spoonbill, Avocet and Mediterranean Gull. Breeding species include Little Grebe, Shelduck, Common Tern and Bearded Tit.

Small areas of saltmarsh occur at the lower end of the estuary. Glasswort *Salicornia sp.* is dominant on the lower marsh and this zone grades into midmarsh where typical species include Sea Lavender *Limonium vulgare*, Sea Aster *Aster tripolium*, Sea Purslane *Halimione portulacoides*, Sea Plantain *Plantago maritima* and Sea Poa *Puccinellia maritima*. The saltmarsh is replaced by brackish reedswamp at the upper end of the estuary and there are extensive stands of Common Reed *Phragmites australis*.

A flood-bank surrounds the estuary and behind this is a borrow dyke which contains distinctive brackish water communities of plants and invertebrates. Marginal plants include Sea Club-rush *Scirpus maritimus* and Mud Rush *Juncus gerardi* while the dominant water plant is Spiked Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum*. The maritime grassland on the edge of the estuary includes the rare Bulbous Fox-tail *Alopecurus bulbosus*.

The uncommon mollusc, *Assimineia grayana* has been recorded from the upper estuary.