

COUNTY: NORFOLK

SITE NAME: DILLINGTON CARR,
GRESSENHALL

DISTRICT: BRECKLAND

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

Local Planning Authority: Breckland District Council

National Grid Reference: TF 971158 Area: 49 (ha.) 121 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 132 1:10,000: TF 91 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): – Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Description:

This site is an extensive area of carr woodland and open water occupying the valley floor and sides of a small tributary of the River Wensum. The wettest areas of carr are probably the best example of sump alder woodland in west Norfolk, closely resembling the carr woodlands found in Broadland. The site also includes extensive stands of the nationally rare lowland bird cherry-alder woodland. Irrigation reservoirs have been created within the carr and these flooded areas of former woodland support the freshwater component of an outstanding assemblage of breeding birds including several uncommon species.

The drier parts of the site, on light, acidic soils, support bird cherry-alder woodland with scattered plantings of conifers and poplars. Trees and shrubs associated with this community include frequent downy birch *Betula pubescens*, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and common sallow *Salix cinerea* in addition to abundant alder *Alnus glutinosa* and bird-cherry *Prunus padus*. Although large areas are secondary woodland with a disturbed round flora, there are stands of possible ancient woodland on the site. Here the ground flora is richer and includes dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, opposite-leaved golden saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*.

The sump alder carr occurs in low-lying swampy areas on the valley-floor. Alder forms extensive stands with guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and common sallow. The semi-liquid muds support a mixed ground flora which includes yellow flag *Iris pseudacorus*, angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, lesser pond sedge *Carex acutiformis*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris* and meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*.

The irrigation reservoirs contain shallow waters with some extensive stands of reedswamp. Water-plants are not well-represented but there are small patches of yellow water-lily *Nuphar lutea*, water violet *Hottonia palustris* and mare's-tail *Hippuris vulgaris*.

The freshwater habitats support a wide range of breeding birds including gadwall, pochard, teal, tufted duck, shoveler, great crested grebe and kingfisher. The surrounding woodland is also rich in breeding species, the more notable being barn owl, little owl, lesser spotted woodpecker, willow tit, nuthatch, nightingale and garden warbler.