

COUNTY: DEVON

SITE NAME: ASHCULM TURBARY

DISTRICT: MID DEVON

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

Local Planning Authority: Devon County Council, Mid Devon District Council

National Grid Reference: ST 147157 Area: 6.6 (ha.) 16.3 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:500,000: 193 1:10,000: ST 11 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1976 Date of Last Revision: 1976

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

Other Information:

Devon Trust for Nature Conservation Reserve.
Common land.

Description:

Ashculm Turbary is important for its wet heathland communities and represents a habitat much reduced in Devon in recent years.

With an altitude range of 198m to 213m, the site is situated mainly on the Upper Greensand of an east-facing valley side of a tributary of the River Culm. The western boundary coincides with the springline occurring at the junction of the Upper Greensand with the overlying Clay-with-flints. There are alluvial sand and gravel deposits below part of the site's eastern-most section.

Wet heath has developed over most of the site. This is composed primarily of a mosaic of purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, western gorse *Ulex gallii* and heather *Calluna vulgaris*. Associated species are cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, heath spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* and heath milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia*. Also characteristic of the low base status are carnation sedge *Carex panicea* and common yellow-sedge *C. demissa*, together with common cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, round-leaved sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, oblong-leaved sundew *D. intermedia*, pale butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica* and lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*.

In the wetter areas, bog mosses *Sphagnum spp.* become more abundant. Herbs associated with the hummocks and pools include bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, Meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, bog pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, bog stitchwort *Stellaria alsine*, white beak-sedge *Rhynchospora alba* and marsh St. John's wort *Hypericum elodes*.

Adding to the habitat diversity of the site are patches of dry heath containing bell heather *Erica cinerea*, western gorse, heather and bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. Areas of woodland and scattered scrub occur throughout. The main species are birches *Betula spp.* and willow *Salix cinerea*, together with pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*. In addition to purple moor-grass, the ground flora includes golden saxifrage *Chrysozplenium oppositifolium*, wood horsetail *Equisetum sylvaticum* and wood avens *Geum urbanum*. In some places alder *Alnus glutinosa* forms pure stands.

The site's variety of habitats in turn supports a rich and varied fauna. Butterfly species include pearl-bordered fritillary *Argynnis silene* and silver-studded blue *Plebejus argus*. Birds recorded include hobby *Falco subuteo* and barn owl *Tyto alba*, whilst mammals

present are dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* and harvest mouse *Micromys minutus soricinus*. Reptiles and amphibians present include grass snake *Natrix natrix*, smooth newt *Triturus vulgaris* and frog *Rana temporaria*.