

County: Humberside

Site name: South Cliffe Common

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

Local Planning Authority: Boothferry Borough Council, East Yorkshire Borough Council

National grid reference: SE 859358, 860342

Ordnance survey sheet: 1:50,000: 106

1:10,000: SE 83 NE, SE 83 SE

Area: 12.5 (ha)	30.9 (ac) (Boothferry)
47.1 (ha)	116.4 (ac) (East Yorkshire)
59.6 (ha)	147.3 (ac) (Total)

First Notified: 1988

Description:

South Cliffe Common consists of a mixture of heathland and acidic grassland associated with the transition between the glacial sands of the Vale of York and the former carr lands of the Humber Head levels. It is important as a remnant of once much more widespread habitats, now substantially reduced by agricultural improvement and conifer planting, and forms one of only six extensive heathlands developed on sand remaining in Humberside.

The site consists of two disjunct areas – Bunny Hill and Hotham Carrs.

Much of Bunny Hill is a mosaic of ericaceous heath and acid grassland dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris*, purple moore-grass *Molinia caerulea*, mat-grass *Nardus stricta* and heath rush *Juncus squarrosus*. There are several areas of invasive birch *Betula pendula* woodland, with occasional oak *Quercus* sp., and self-sown pine *Pinus sylvestris* from adjacent plantations. Bunny Hill, as its name suggests, is an extensive rabbit warren, and there are consequently areas of open sand with a characteristic flora including early hair-grass *Aira praecox*, parsley piert *Aphanes arvensis*, common stork's-bill *Erodium cicutarium*, heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile* and thyme-leaved speedwell *Veronica serpyllifolia*. Also present is a small area of lichen rich heath with an abundance of *Cladonia* species. There is an area of neutral grassland adjacent to Keeper's Cottage and, although rather coarse, this supports herbs such as common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and adder's tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*.

South of Bunny Hill Farm, the dry sands give way to the peatlands of South Cliffe Carr where wet acid grassland predominates with mat-grass, heath rush and soft rush *Juncus effusus* dominant and localised patches of narrow buckler fern *Dryopteris carthusiana*, bog moss *Sphagnum* spp., and hare's-tail cotton-grass *Eriophorum vaginatum*.

Hotham Carr is a mixture of wet acid grassland, poor fen, and birch woodland, with limited areas of basin mire and bog pools. Mat-grass predominates, with rushes *Juncus acutiflorus*, *J. effusus*, *J. inflexus* and *J. conglomeratus* in the wetter areas and a variety of poor-fen species such as marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, and marsh violet *Viola palustris*. The two bog pools in the centre of the site are surrounded

by a floating carpet of common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and jointed rush *Juncus articulatus*.

The site is extremely rich in insects and other invertebrates. Many nationally uncommon species occur, particularly those associated with dry, sandy or wet, acid conditions. Two particularly rare species have been recorded *Capsus wagneri*, a fen bug known only from Cambridgeshire and Yorkshire, and *Colobaea distincta*, a small killing fly.

The diversity of habitats also supports a wide range of bird species, both breeding and wintering, with over 100 species recorded in recent years, including locally scarce breeding species such as nightjar and lesser-spotted woodpecker.