

COUNTY: BERKSHIRE

SITE NAME: LONGMOOR BOG

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

Local Planning Authorities: Wokingham District Council, Berkshire County Council

National Grid Reference: SU782653

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: **1:10,000:** SU76 NE/SE

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

Area: 14.4 ha 35.5 ac

Other information: Part of the site is a Local Nature Reserve declared under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Longmoor Bog is one of a few examples in Berkshire of a base-poor valley mire, its main features being a well-developed carr of alder *Alnus glutinosa*, grey willow *Salix cinerea*, downy birch *Betula pubescens* and alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus* and an area of wet heathland dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*. The remainder of the site is predominantly secondary mixed woodland.

Situated three miles south-west of Wokingham, Longmoor Bog lies in a shallow valley on sandy deposits of the Lower Bagshot beds. On higher ground there are free-draining acid soils, whilst in the valley bottom underlying clay has impeded the drainage and allowed peat to accumulate to a depth of over a metre. The peat provides a virtually unbroken pollen record for the last 7,500 years and cores taken from it have been used to demonstrate past changes in vegetation and landuse for the surrounding area. Studies suggest that some of the upper peat has been removed, possibly by medieval peat diggers.

A small stream arises from an outlet from Longmoor Lake and follows a straight course through the main area of carr woodland. The peaty soil remains waterlogged throughout the year, locally forming a 'ferruginous swamp' due to the presence of rust-coloured iron bacteria. The ground is carpeted by mosses, particularly the moderately shade-tolerant species *Sphagnum fimbriatum*, one of eight species of bog moss occurring. Other species, including the mosses *Orthotrichum lyelli* and *Ulota crispa*, grow on trees as do the liverworts *Lejeunea ulicina* and *Metzgeria fruticulosa*. Many of the mosses and liverworts occurring are uncommon or rare in east Berkshire.

Associated with the carr are a number of higher plants, particularly acid-tolerant species. Water horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile* and white sedge *Carex curta* are abundant and bottle sedge *C. rostrata* also occurs frequently. Other species include hard fern *Blechnum spicant*, narrow buckler fern *Dryopteris carthusiana*, bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, common wintergreen *Pyrola minor*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, lesser skullcap *Scutellaria minor* and common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*.

The wet heathland lies to the south of the stream and carr and is likewise characterised by the abundance of mosses, particularly *Sphagnum capillifolium*, *S. cuspidatum*, *S. recurvum* and other species of bog moss. Cross-leaved heath is the dominant dwarf shrub, but heather *Calluna vulgaris* and dwarf gorse *Ulex minor* also occur. Several species of rushes are found, including heath rush *Juncus squarrosus* and bulbous rush *J. kochii*. Common cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and the insectivorous round-leaved sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* also occur locally.

The open heath and the carr merge into mixed woodland on the drier soils, consisting of abundant birch *Betula* spp. with pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*, aspen *Populus tremula* and rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*. Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* is frequent and wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* locally abundant. Other

plants include pill sedge *Carex pilulifera*, slender rush *Juncus tenuis*, heath woodrush *Luzula multiflora*, sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, heath groundsel *Senecio sylvaticus*, heath spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* and broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*.

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The woodland and heathland support a variety of breeding birds including woodcock, great spotted and green woodpeckers, treecreeper and tree pipit.

Longmoor Bog is an important site for insects, especially species associated with the wet heathland, such as the bog bush cricket *Metrioptera brachyptera* and silver-studded blue butterfly *Plebejus argus*, a declining species in southern Britain. Dragonflies recorded include *Anax imperator*, *Aeshna cyanea*, *A. juncea*, *Cordulea aenea* and *Orthetrum cancellatum*. Waved black *Parascotia fuliginaria* and marbled white spot *Cithacodia pygarga* moths have been recorded and large nests of the wood ant *Formica rufa* are found in the drier parts of the woodland.

Fungi are well represented and include typical heathland and woodland species such as fly agaric *Amanita muscaria*, tawny grisette *A. fulva*, *Laccaria laccata*, *Lactarius tabidus*, *L. turpis* and *Tricholoma fulvum*.