

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: CRANBERRY ROUGH, HOCKHAM

DISTRICT: Breckland

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

Local Planning Authority: Breckland District Council

National Grid Reference: TL 934936

Area: 81.4 (ha) 201.1 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 144

1:10,000: TL 99 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1961

Date of Last Revision: N/A

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Part of this site is owned by the Norfolk Naturalists' Trust. The boundary has been extended.

Reasons for Notification:

Cranberry Rough is a basin-mire which has developed on the site of a former lake. It is now occupied by swamp woodland of Alder, Willow and Birch, tall fen, grassland and a network of ditches and pools. The site's high and stable water level and lack of pollution mean that it contains an exceptionally wide range of wetland plants, butterflies and other insects.

In the wettest areas of woodland the ground between the trees is soft peat with scattered tussocks of the Lesser Tussock Sedge *Carex appropinquata*. The Marsh Fern *Thelypteris palustris* is locally abundant. Where conditions are drier, the ground vegetation is largely dominated by the moss *Mnium hornum*. Purple Moor Grass and remote Sedge are amongst the associated species.

Extensive areas beneath the wetland are covered by carpets of *Sphagnum* mosses that appear to be spreading. Two noteworthy plants are found in these Sphagnum-dominated areas, Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis* and Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccus*. Cotton-Grass *Eriophorum sp.* is also locally abundant.

As well as the carr there are areas of species-rich tall fen. These are mostly at the Eastern end of the site, though narrow strips have established themselves along the cleared sides of dykes. Many different plants share dominance in the fen areas including Reed, several Sedge species, Purple Small Reed, Reed Canary Grass, Reed Grass and the nationally rare grass *Calamagrostis stricta*. There is also an exceptionally rich collection of associated species including Bogbean, Milk Parsley *Peucedanum palustre*, Nodding Bur-Marigold, Marsh Cinquefoil and Cowbane *Cicuta virosa*.

On the driest parts of the site, fen vegetation gives way to damp grassland, often very tussocky, and dominated by Soft Rush, False Oat-Grass, Yorkshire Fog, Purple Small-Reed and Meadowseet. Again this vegetation contains a wide range of associated plant species including Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, Valerian, Purple Loosestrife and Larger Bird'sfoot Trefoil.

Permanent open water occurs in the dyke network and in two artificial ponds. The ditches tend to be heavily shaded and contain rather few aquatic plants. Water Violet is by far the most abundant.

The site is also noted for the abundance of its invertebrate life. Dragon and damsel flies are present in large numbers and it supports very large numbers of White Admiral butterflies. Little Grebe, Shoveler, Tufted Duck and Gadwall are amongst the waterfowl known to breed on the site. Other birds recorded include Sedge and Reed Warblers. Over 60 species of spider have been recorded.

Pollen and plant remains preserved in the peat below this site have played an important part in the reconstruction of the past vegetation of the Breckland area.