

County: Devon **Site Name:** Gilmoor and Moorlands

District: West 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, Borough of West Devon

National Grid Reference: SX 633987 **Area:** 10.9 (ha) 26.9 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 191 **1:10,000:** SX 69 NW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987 **Date of Last Revision:** 1988

Other Information:

Site boundary amended. Formerly called Fernhills Moor SSSI.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site comprises an area of unimproved herb-rich acidic grassland of a restricted community type, together with scrub and woodland; it is of importance for its high botanical interest.

The area is situated a few miles north of Dartmoor on Carboniferous shales. The soils are acidic clays, soil drainage varying over the site from poor to good. Much of the land is on a gently south facing slope.

The grassland sward consists predominantly of purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and includes eleven sedge species, the most abundant of which are tawny sedge *Carex hostiana*, carnation sedge *C. panicea*, flea sedge *C. pulicaris* and green-ribbed sedge *C. binervis*. The herb content is high and a wide range of species are found including petty whin *Genista anglica*, lesser butterfly-orchid *Platanthera bifolia*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, bitter-vetch *Lathyrus montanus* and saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*.

In the wettest areas where rushes *Juncus* spp. are abundant, bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and marsh St John's-wort *Hypericum elodes* occur.

The areas of scrub are dominated by young birch *Betula pendula* and willow *Salix* spp. which merge with the narrow woodland strips associated with old field boundaries.

Tree pipit *Anthus trivialis* and the woodlark *Lullula arborea* have recently bred in the grassland areas, which also provide a hunting ground for barn owls *Tyto alba*.

The breeding butterflies include good populations of the uncommon and declining marsh fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia*, small pearl-bordered fritillary *Boloria selene*, silver washed fritillary *Argynnis paphia* and brown hairstreak *Thecla betulae*. In total twenty-eight butterfly species have been recorded.