

COUNTY: Norfolk

SITE NAME: HOLT LOWES

DISTRICT: North Norfolk

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

Local Planning Authority: North Norfolk District council

National Grid Reference: TG 088374 Area: 49.3 (ha) 121.8 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 133 1:10,000: TG 03 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1954 Date of Last Revision: –

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

Other Information:

This site is listed in 'A Nature Conservation Review'. The boundary has been amended by the deletion of an area of conifer plantation.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This is an area of dry sandy heathland that grades into flushed slopes along the valley of the River Glaven. There is an excellent example of a mixed valley mire in a small tributary valley that bisects the heath. The feeder stream emerges from underlying chalk and these alkaline waters contrast strongly with acidic, nutrient-poor areas on the valley-sides below the heathland. The mixed mire communities are diverse and reflect the variations in alkalinity and nutrient availability in the drainage waters. Several uncommon plants and animals are present, including some at their only known East Anglian locality.

The extensive areas of dry heathland on undulating ground are dominated by Heather *Calluna vulgaris* with Bell Heather *Erica cinerea*, Western Gorse *Ulex gallii* and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. The spread of scrub and secondary woodland has been checked by periodic fires, and recent management.

An acidic mire community in the tributary valley receives drainage waters from the surrounding heathland on glacial drifts. Plants characteristic of these wet, acidic conditions include several species of Bog Moss *Sphagnum* spp., Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*, Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, Common Butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*, Common cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and Heath Rush *Juncus squarrosus*. There is a narrow zone of calcareous mire along the axis of the tributary stream but this community is better developed on flushed slopes above the River Glaven. A typically diverse calcareous fen vegetation has developed with Blunt-flowered Rush *Juncus subnodulosus*, Black Bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans*, Great Sundew *Drosera anglica*, Grass of Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, Twayblade *Listera ovata* and Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella* over a discontinuous bryophyte carpet.

Areas of nutrient-rich fen on the valley-floor of the Glaven resemble some of the Broadland fens with Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, Blunt-flowered Rush, Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*. Carr woodland, dominated by Alder *Alnus glutinosa* with Birch *Betula pubescens* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, is spreading onto the open areas of fen.

The ground flora includes Wood Horsetail *Equisetum sylvaticum* at its only known surviving East Anglian locality.

The invertebrate fauna is particularly rich with the wet, boggy areas supporting a population of the notable Bog Bush Cricket *Metrioptera brachyptera* and the only known East Anglian population of the Keeled Skimmer dragonfly *Orthetrum coerulescens*.