

County: Devon

Site Name: Spring Head Axmouth

District: East Devon

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

Local Planning Authority: Devon County Council
East Devon District Council

National Grid Reference: SY 272907 **Area:** 13.1 (ha) 32.4 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 193 **1:10,000:** SY 29 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

This is a new site.

The site is within the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Description:

The site is part of a steep-sided valley, 0.5 km to the south-east of Axmouth, at an altitude of about 70 m. The soils are varied, being derived from an assemblage of Lower Jurassic and Cretaceous calcareous and clay-based rocks. The main interest is the presence of herb-rich habitats including scrub woodland, calcareous grassland and fen, the last being of particular interest for its variety of orchids.

Predominant species of the fen include purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, quaking grass *Briza media*, broad-leaved cottongrass *Eriophorum latifolium*, marsh arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris*, the sedges *Carex nigra*, *C. panicea* and *C. pulicaris*, few-flowered spike-rush *Eleocharis quinqueflora* and black bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans*.

Spring Head is an important site for orchids, and the classic locality for the leopard orchid *Orchis pardalina*, now considered to be a hybrid of *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and *D. fuchsii*. Other orchids present include marsh helleborine *Epipactis palustris* and marsh fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea* var. *densiflora*.

The site also supports a wide variety of Lepidoptera including the marsh fritillary *Euphydryas aurinea*, green hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*, marbled white *Melanargia galathea*, dingy skipper *Erynnis tages* and grizzled skipper *Pyrgus malvae*.