

County: Humberside

Site Name: Melbourne and Thornton Ings

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

Local Planning Authority: East Yorkshire Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SE 745450

Area: 200.3 (ha) 494.9 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 105
SE

1:10,000: SE 74 NW, SW, NE,

First Notified: 1985

Date of Revision: 1986

Description:

Melbourne and Thornton Ings comprises a series of flood meadows, pasture and woodland associated with the Beck and the Pocklington Canal, supporting a rich diversity of plant species and of outstanding ornithological interest.

Plant communities of the grassland show similarities with those of the Derwent Ings SSSI, and are dependent on traditional management to maintain their interest. In the wetter situations stands of reed sweetgrass *Glyceria maxim*, reed grass *Phalaris arundinacea* and bladder sedge *Carex vesicaria* are typical, with marsh stitchwort *Stellaria palustris* and tubular water-dropwort *Oenanthe fistulosa*. Somewhat drier fields are rich in sedges such as brown sedge *Carex disticha*, carnation sedge *C. panicea*, greater and lesser pond sedge *C. riparia* and *C. acutiformis*, together with characteristic grasses including meadow fescue *Festuca pratensis*, tall fescue *F. arundinacea*, marsh foxtail *Alopecurus geniculatus* and meadow foxtail *A. pratensis*. The rich herb flora contains marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*, sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, common meadow-rue *Thalictrum flavum*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, marsh arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris*, bog bean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and, notably, early marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata* and marsh pea *Lathyrus palustris*. In some fields rushes *Juncus effusus*, *J. inflexus* dominate and provide important cover for breeding birds. Aquatic habitats are also important. Ditches contain species such as water violet *Hottonia palustris* and mare's-tail *Hippuris vulgaris*. The Pocklington Canal is known to have rich invertebrate fauna and fringing vegetation dominated by reed sweetgrass and great willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, which in places gives way to beds of reed *Phragmites australis*. Additionally there are areas of damp alder woodland adjoining marsh and tall fen communities in which panicked sedge *C. paniculata* and climbing fumitory *Corydalis claviculata* occur. The site supports a rich breeding bird community with over 80 species known to have bred in recent years. Breeding wildfowl are of particular importance with 13 species including notably pintail, garganey and gadwall. Breeding waders include high densities of curlew, lapwing, snipe and redshank, as well as smaller numbers of oystercatcher and common sandpiper.

In winter the grasslands support nationally important numbers of teal (up to 2000) and significant numbers of Bewick's swan (up to 65) and wigeon (up to 3000).

The area supports a considerable assemblage of dragonflies with 13 species recorded, the most notable being the red-eyed damselfly *Erythromma najas* at its northern-most British site.

Otters are also known to frequent the site.