

COUNTY: NORFOLK

SITE NAME: ROYDON COMMON

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

Local Planning Authority: Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk

National Grid Reference: TF 685225                      Area: 194.09 (ha.) 479.60 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 132                      1:10,000: TF 62 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act]: 1984                      Date of Last Revision: 1992

Other Information:

A Grade 1 NCR site, the majority owned and managed as a nature reserve by the Norfolk Naturalists Trust.

Description:

Roydon Common is considered to be one of the best examples in Britain of a lowland mixed valley mire, a complex series of plant communities grading from wet acid heath through valley mire to calcareous fen. The mire is extremely diverse and supports many rare and locally uncommon plants. Large areas of nationally important dry *Calluna* heath on acidic sands are also present. There is, in addition, considerable ornithological and entomological interest in the site.

The area of dry heathland, which is dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris* contains scattered gorse *Ulex europaeus* and young silver birch *Betula pendula* and has small areas of bracken around the margins. Flanking the mire itself is the wet heath, dominated by cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* with purple moor-grass places. Species of note include sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, bog mosses *Sphagnum ssp.*, the locally rare cotton-grass *Eriophorum vaginatum*, bushes of bog myrtle *Myrica gale* and the lesser butterfly orchid *Platanthera bifolia*.

The valley mire is a very wet area with extensive carpets of sphagnum moss with the moss *Scorpidium scorpioides* and black bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans*. This species-rich area contains the rare bog orchid *Phragmites paludosa* and marsh fern *Thelypteris thelypteroides* and other interesting species including Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccos*, bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, common cotton-grass *E. angustifolium* and all three species of sundew *Drosera spp.*

The peats get progressively more alkaline near the drainage axis and a zone of calcareous fen is present, where reed *Phragmites australis* is locally common with saw sedge *Cladium mariscus* and a number of typical fenland plants including great sundew *D. anglica*, marsh lousewort *Pedicularis palustris*, bog pimpinell *Anagallis tenella*, common butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*, intermediate bladderwort *Utricularia intermedia* and southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*. An area of wet carr dominated by alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus* and eared willow *Salix aurita* is present along the central water course of the mire.

To the east of the mire is an extensive area of woodland and acidic grassland. The woodland is mostly of pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and

silver birch over a ground flora of bracken, acid grassland and bramble. The acid grassland is dominated by wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* and purple moor-grass with frequent sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* and tormentil *Potentilla erecta*.

Several areas of marshy grassland are present where sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus* is dominant. Marsh orchids are abundant and other interesting species include marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* and bog bean *Menyanthes trifoliata*.

Several uncommon species of insect have been recorded from the common including the rare dragonfly *Sympetum danae*.

Uncommon birds including nightjar, curlew, redshank and barn owl breed on the site, and birds of prey use the common as a roosting site in the winter; hen harrier, merlin, sparrowhawk and rough-legged buzzard are regularly recorded.