

COUNTY: NORFOLK            SITE NAME: SEA MERE, HINGHAM

DISTRICT: SOUTH NORFOLK

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

Local Planning Authority: South Norfolk District Council

National Grid Reference: TG 035012            Area: 36.25 (ha.) 89.57 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 144            1:10,000: TG 00 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1968            Date of Last Revision: –

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

Other Information:

The boundary has been modified by the deletion of Deopham Plantation.

Description:

This site contains a sizeable natural lake and an area of species-rich fen and grazing marsh. Additional interest is provided by deciduous plantations that retain some elements of older woodland. The site has ornithological interest because of the diversity of habitats that it contains.

The Mere itself has dense growths of phytoplanktonic algae probably as a result of excretal enrichment from wintering gulls and as a result water plants are restricted to a few patches of yellow water lily *Nuphar lutea*. The marginal vegetation is dominated by reed *Phragmites communis*. Breeding birds include great crested grebe and kingfisher, and there are large numbers of duck in winter.

The grazing marshes are generally very wet due to poor drainage and are dominated by tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* and fen rush *Juncus subnodulosus*. On the lowest lying parts of the site a fen community has developed, dominated by several species of sedge *Carex spp.*, fen rush and reed canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*. The fen is species-rich and includes saw sedge *Cladium mariscus* marsh orchids *Dactylorhiza spp.*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, yellow loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris*, yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus* and the rare green figwort *Scrophularia umbrosa*. Willow *Salix sp.* is abundant on parts of the marsh and is spreading. Breeding birds include snipe, reed bunting, sedge and grasshopper warblers. The drier parts of the marsh have been partially improved and are grazed by cattle.

The mature plantations surrounding Sea Mere are mostly maiden trees of oak *Quercus robur*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, although small areas of coppiced hazel *Corylus avellana* under oak standards are present. The ground flora is dominated by dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* with lords-and-ladies *Arum maculatum*, common twayblade *Listera ovata* and nettle-leaved bellflower *Campanula trachelium*. The presence of herb paris *Paris quadrifolia* suggests that some small areas of older woodland have been incorporated into the plantation.