

COUNTY: SOMERSET

SITE NAME: CATCOTT, EDINGTON AND  
CHILTON MOORS

DISTRICT: SEDGEMOOR

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

Local Planning Authority: Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council

National Grid Reference: ST 390420

Area: 1083 (ha) 2676 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 182

1:10,000: ST 44 SW, ST 43, NW,  
ST 34 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1967

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Major part of site is new SSSI but includes Catcott Heath SSSI (notified under 1949  
Act: 1967)

Description:

Catcott, Edington and Chilton Moors form part of the extensive grazing marsh and  
ditch systems of the Somerset Levels and Moors. The land lies below 8m ODN in the  
basin of the River Brue. The soils are principally of the Altcar series reed peats which  
are overlain in parts by remnants of the Turberry Moor series moss peats. On the  
northern and southern fringes of the site the peat soils are overlain by Midelney series  
alluvial clay.

The water table is high for most of the year with occasional winter flooding by  
overtopping of the River Brue. The complex of rhynes and ditches has a high penned  
water level in summer and drains freely to the arterial system in winter.

A wide range of sward types has developed due to the variation in soils and in  
management practice. Unimproved swards are well represented with many meadows  
dominated by species-rich mire-type communities characterised by Meadow Thistle  
*Cirsium dissectum*, Meadow Rue *Thalictrum flavum*, Quaking-grass *Briza media*,  
Heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*, Carnation Sedge *Carex panicea*, Common Sedge  
*C. nigra* and Southern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*. Wetter unimproved  
marshy grassland may, in addition, contain Rushes *Juncus* spp, Marsh marigold  
*Caltha palustris*, Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, Tubular Water-dropwort  
*Oenanthe fistulosa*, Ragged-Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* and Creeping Jenny  
*Lysimachia nummularia*. A few meadows also contain Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa  
pratensis*. Many of the semi-improved *Festuca-Lolium* grasslands include components  
of the mire-type community, often with Oxeye Daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*,  
Autumn Hawkbit *Leontodon autumnalis* and Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*.

Catcott Heath, on the south-eastern part of the site, contains an area of Purple Moor-  
grass *Molinia caerulea*, Bog Myrtle *Myrica gale* and Cross-leaved Heath *Erica  
tetralix* heathland with Alder *Alnus glutinosa* carr woodland and mixed scrub,  
containing Common Cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium* and Royal Fern  
*Osmunda regalis*. The heath is noted for its rare vascular plants including Marsh Pea  
*Lathyrus palustris* Milk-parsley *Peucedanum palustre* and Marsh Fern *Thelypteris  
thelypteroides*. Other species with restricted distributions nationally include Marsh  
Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, Great Fen-sedge *Cladium mariscus*, Slender Sedge  
*Carex lasiocarpa* and Marsh Stitchwort *Stellaria palustris*. A similar but less species-

rich area of alder carr and wet grassland is found on Burtle Whites on the North-eastern part of the site.

127 aquatic and bankside vascular plant species have been recorded in the field ditches, IDB-maintained rhynes and deep arterial watercourses. The diverse bankside flora, dominated by Reed Sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, includes Flowering Rush *Butomus umbellatus*, Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* and Water Dock *Rumex hydrolapathum*. Aquatic deep water species such as Yellow Water-lily *Nuphar lutea* and Arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia* are largely confined to the eutrophic arterial channels. The ditches and rhynes contain a good range of submerged species: notably Fan-leaved Water-crowfoot *Ranunculus circinatus*, Spiked Water-milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum*, Water-violet *Hottonia palustris* and Greater Bladderwort *Utricularis vulgaris*. Floating species include Frogbit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* and Rootless Duckweed *Wolffia arrhiza* with several notable emergent species including Mare's-tail *Hippuris vulgaris*, Greater Water-parsnip *Sium latifolium*, Lesser Water-plantain *Baldellia ranunculoides* and Fine-leaved-Water-dropwort *Oenanthe aquatica*.

A diverse invertebrate fauna is associated with these botanically rich water channels. The water beetle fauna is of exceptional interest, with the nationally rare species *Haliphus mucronatus* and *Hydrophilus piceus* present. The rare soldier fly *Stratiomys furcata* is found, and there are good numbers of dragonflies and damselflies, notably *Brachytron pratense* and *Sympetrum sanguineum*.

Other habitats present include hedges and hedgerow trees of Alder, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and willow *Salix spp.*

These diverse habitats provide suitable feeding and nesting sites for a wide range of birds. In winter, waterfowl such as Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricota*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Dunlin *Calidris alpina* feed on the wet grasslands, whilst under flood conditions, wildfowl such as Teal *Anas crecca*, Wigeon *A. penelope* and Mallard *A. platyrhynchos* move on to the Moors. The pastures remain moist into spring and early summer when the tussocky fields support breeding Snipe, Lapwing, Curlew *Numenius arquata* and a few pairs of Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* and Whinchat *Saxicola rubeta* breed on the moors and in spring, the pastures are an important feeding ground for Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* on migration.

Other vertebrate species present, include the Otter *Lutra lutra*, Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* and Common Frog *Rana temporaria*.