

COUNTY: NORFOLK            SITE NAME: SYDERSTONE COMMON

DISTRICT: WEST NORFOLK AND NORTH NORFOLK

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

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

National Grid Reference: TF 834315            Area: 42.5 (ha.) 105 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 143            1:10,000: TF 83 SW

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983            Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site. Part owned and managed as a nature reserve by Norfolk Naturalists' Trust.

Description:

Syderstone Common consists of a series of heath and grassland communities occupying a shallow valley in the headwaters of the River Tat, a tributary of the River Wensum. These communities grade from dry heath dominated by gorse scrub, but with areas of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, heather *Calluna vulgaris* and acid grassland dominated by wavy hair grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*, to marshy, acid grassland dominated by purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea* and rushes *Juncus* spp. In the lowest areas there are a series of seasonally wet pools.

Much of the heathland and the gorse dominated area also supports hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* scrub and developing birch *Betula pendula* woodland. Interesting plants found in the heathland include petty whin *Genista anglica* and dodder *Cuscuta epithimum*.

The soils of Syderstone Common are glacially derived sands and gravels overlying chalk. Because of this the pools, although surrounded by acid heathland, contain neutral to alkaline water. This provides suitable conditions for breeding colonies of five species of amphibian including a viable population of natterjack toads *Bufo calamita*. These toads are a nationally rare species and are protected under Section 9 of the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Syderstone Common is one of only two inland heathland colonies of natterjack toads that are known to have survived recent habitat losses and disturbance and it is the more viable of the two. It is also one of only three breeding colonies now known in East Anglia.