

COUNTY: SOMERSET      SITE NAME: WOOLHAYES FARM

DISTRICT: SOUTH SOMERSET

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, South Somerset District Council

National Grid Reference: ST 315 109      Area: 13.16 (ha.) 32.5 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 193      1:10,000: –

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1992      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A new site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site comprises swamp, mire and grassland habitats which are now rare in Britain and which have declined dramatically over the last few years as a result of agricultural improvements. It is the largest known example of its type in Somerset and the communities present are near the western limit of their geographical range. The transitions from mire to swamp and grassland are also important.

The site is located on a gently sloping valley side facing south-east. The underlying geology is Cretaceous Lower Greensand which overlies Jurassic Lower Lias shales. The former is an aquifer and springs and seepage lines occur at the geological boundary. Associated with these wet areas is a mire community which is rare in south-west Britain and which consists of abundant Lesser Pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis* with Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus* and Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*. Other associated species include Southern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, Marsh Valerian *Valeriana dioica* and Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*. There are also small areas Common Reed *Phragmites australis* and Greater Tussock-sedge *Carex paniculata* swamp where associated species include Great Horsetail *Equisetum telmateia*.

In drier parts of the site an unimproved neutral grassland community occurs. The sward is composed of a variety of grasses, including Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Quaking-grass *Briza media*. Herbs are abundant and include Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Ox-eye Daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, Yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor* and Corky-fruited Water-dropwort *Oenanthe pimpinelloides* which is a nationally scarce species.

Breeding birds include Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* and Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*.