

COUNTY: KENT      SITE NAME: COWDEN POUND PASTURES

DISTRICT:

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

Local Planning Authorities: Sevenoaks District Council

National Grid Reference: TQ 459 433      Area: 5.8 (ha.) 14.33 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheets 1:50,000: 188      1:10,000: TQ 44 SE

Date notified (Under 1981 Act): 1994

Other Information:

The site lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Description:

This site, on one side of a valley, consists of a pasture divided into three by strips of scrub and bordered by a stream, woodland and scrub. The pasture consists of agriculturally unimproved neutral grassland, a nationally rare habitat, and is one of the few surviving locations for this habitat in the High Weald.

Traditional management in the form of grazing is required to maintain the grassland without scrub encroachment.

The sward of the pasture is diverse and species-rich and is characterised by the grass crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*. Other grasses include common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, creeping bent *A. stolonifera*, sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*. Among the many other plants are yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, field wood-rush *Luzula campestris*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, betony *Betonica officinalis* (characteristic of the High Weald), brown sedge *Carex disticha* and heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens* (both scarce in Kent) and heath dog-violet *Viola canina* (rare in Kent). At the bottom of the slope, by the stream, the meadow is bordered by an area of wet grassland. The damp soil of this area supports typical fen meadow species such as jointed rush *Juncus articulatus*, soft rush *J. effusus*, marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre*, greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and water mint *Mentha aquatica*. Other species of the sward include common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, common marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and common sorrel *Rumex acetosa*.

A narrow woodland borders the stream, which includes alder *Alnus glutinosa*, holly *Ilex aquifolium* and grey willow *Salix cinerea*. The ground flora includes opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, yellow pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum* and polypody *Polypodium vulgare* (scarce in Kent).