

COUNTY: SUFFOLK      SITE NAME: LACKFORD LAKES

DISTRICT: ST EDMUNDSBURY

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

Local Planning Authorities: ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL, Suffolk County Council

National Grid Reference: TL 806707      Area: 106.08 (ha.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 155      1:10,000: TL 77 SE, TL 87 SW

Date Notified: 1997

Other Information:

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Lackford Lakes consists of a series of lakes formed by sand and gravel extraction in the valley of the River Lark. The lakes are set within a mosaic of sandy acid grassland, marshy grassland, scrub, wet and dry woodlands, ditches, bare ground and steep sandy banks. The lakes and surrounding habitat support a diverse and abundant community of breeding and overwintering birds, and a high number of dragonfly species.

The lakes are of varied age, with mineral extraction beginning in the late 1960s and continuing until the 1990s. The lakes vary in area, depth and amount of plant growth. It is this variation, together with the variation in surrounding habitat, that enables the site to support its great amount of bird-life and dragonflies. The lakes are situated in a major bird flyway, which enables its colonisation by many migratory species.

Many species of bird regularly breed at Lackford Lakes, using the range of aquatic and terrestrial habitats available. For example, skylarks breed on the dry grassland, lapwing breed on the marshy grassland, grey partridge breed at the base of hedges or woodland edge, and song thrush, linnet, bullfinch and turtle dove breed in the scrub and woodland. The open water and their margins in particular support a very diverse range of breeding birds. Examples include reed bunting, gadwall, shoveler, pochard, little ringed plover and water rail. A range of marginal vegetation, from bare shingle and short rabbit-grazed grassland to tall emergent vegetation provides the various habitats required by these birds.

In winter, large numbers of waterfowl use the lakes. Nationally important populations (ie over 1% of the total national population) of gadwall and shoveler regularly occur each year. The range of lake sizes provides suitable conditions for a wide range of waterfowl, from goosanders diving for fish in the deepest waters, to teal in the shallower lakes and margins.

The amount of lake variation and availability of diverse terrestrial habitat provides conditions suitable for colonisation by a wide range of insects, including dragonflies and damselflies. Many species of dragonfly/damselfly are found, including species of newly-excavated sand and gravel pits, reed or reedmace-filled ditches, small ponds and large lakes.