

**COUNTY:** BERKSHIRE

**SITE NAME:** KENNET AND LAMBOURN FLOODPLAIN

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

**Local Planning Authorities:** Newbury District Council, Berkshire County Council,  
Kennet District Council, Wiltshire County Council

**National Grid Reference:** SU316705, SU402737, SU345687, SU435701, SU453692,  
SU556655, SU450674

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 174 **1:10,000:** SU37 SW, SU47 SW, SU36 NW  
SU46 NE, SU56 NE

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 6 June 1996 **Date of Last Revision:**

**Area:** 22.9 ha 56.9 ac

**Other information:** One of the areas, Rack Marsh, is managed as a nature reserve by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists Trust.

### **Description and Reasons for Notification**

The catchment of the River Kennet forms a major stronghold in England for the nationally rare and declining Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*. This species is listed in the British Red Data Book and is scheduled on Annex II of the European Habitats and Species Directive. It is confined to calcareous river valleys, fens and lake margins. It is thought to be rare throughout Europe and that the British Isles now support a large proportion of the European population.

The six areas included in the site support particularly large populations of Desmoulin's whorl snail. They all have extensive areas of the snail's favoured habitat which is long-established fen or swamp, usually dominated by pond sedges *Carex acutiformis* and *C. riparia*, and reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, often with scattered tussock sedge *Carex paniculata* and common reed *Phragmites australis*. This type of vegetation occurs alongside permanently wet ditches, in wet hollows, alongside streams and runnels and, in places, along the margins of the Kennet and Lambourn rivers.

One of the areas, Eddington Marsh, is one of the largest surviving examples of agriculturally unimproved pasture in the Kennet Valley supporting species-rich grassland. This grassland type is particularly rare and is confined to calcareous river valleys in southern England. Uncommon species include marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*, water avens *Geum rivale*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris* and the moss *Climacium dendroides*. This area is also notable in supporting an outstanding assemblage of wetland invertebrates. The snail-killing flies are particularly well represented including two nationally scarce species *Pherbellia griseola* and *Psacadina verbekei* whose larvae feed on aquatic snails. Also present are the dance flies *Hilara quadriseta*, which is a provisional Red Data Book species, the nationally scarce *Platypalpus niger* and the nationally scarce soldier fly *Oxycera morrisoni*. The area is also of considerable value in providing feeding places for snipe.

Rack Marsh supports a number of locally uncommon plants. These include marsh arrow-grass *Triglochin palustris*, southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and marsh valerian. Wetland species such as these are now very rare in the Kennet and Lambourn floodplain due to river engineering and agricultural intensification.