

File ref:

County: Durham **Site Name:** Bowes Moor

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

Local Planning Authority: Teesdale District Council

National Grid Reference: NY 923104 **Area:** 4,457.7 (ha) 11,014.9 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50 000 92 **1:25 000** NY 80, 81
90, 91

First Notified: 1989

Other Information:

Bowes Moor is of international importance and meets the criteria for designation under the terms of the European Community Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds.

Description:

Bowes Moor is an extensive tract of moorland in south-west Durham which comprises important areas of blanket bog with dry and wet heath, acid grassland, flushes and small open water bodies and is particularly important because of its numerous and diverse moorland bird communities.

Blanket bog covers most of Bowes Moor and this is dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris*, hare's-tail cottongrass *Eriophorum vaginatum*, common cottongrass *E. angustifolium* and deergrass *Trichophorum cespitosum* over a layer of bog mosses *Sphagnum* spp. Locally a bog type transitional in character between upland and lowland bogs has developed and contains cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, bog-rosemary *Andromeda polifolia*, cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccos* and round-leaved sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*. Such vegetation supports well-developed bog moss hummocks which, on their drier tops, support heather and lichens, giving the bog surface a patterned appearance of hummocks and hollows.

Drier parts of the blanket bog support areas dominated by heather, hare's-tail cottongrass, crowberry *Empetrum nigrum*, bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* and cloudberry *Rubus chamaemorus*. Cowberry *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* occurs sparsely within this vegetation.

Vegetation dominated by soft-rush *Juncus effusus*, hair-moss *Polytrichum commune* and a bog moss *Sphagnum recurvum* occurs in wet flushes throughout the moor and where grazing pressure is greater the blanket bog vegetation has been replaced by a wet heath/acid grassland containing deergrass, common cottongrass, heath rush *Juncus squarrosus*, mat-grass *Nardus stricta* and heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*.

Shallower peats and drier mineral soils support heathland containing heather and bilberry and locally acid grassland with sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, mat-grass, wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*, heath bedstraw and tormentil *Potentilla erecta*.

The breeding bird community of this moorland is of particular interest and includes substantial populations of golden plover, curlew, redshank, snipe and lapwing together with smaller numbers of dunlin and birds of prey including merlin and short-eared owl, which are dependent on such large expanses of open moorland. The moor is managed for red grouse and also supports black grouse. Ring ouzel and wheatear occur on the drier, rocky ground with dipper, common sandpiper and oystercatcher along the streams. Additional interest is provided by a number of small tarns which support colonies of black-headed gull and waterfowl including teal, mallard, tufted duck and a significant proportion of the English breeding population of wigeon.