

COUNTY: AVON

SITE NAME: CHEW VALLEY LAKE

DISTRICT: WANSDYKE

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

Local Planning Authority: AVON COUNTY COUNCIL WANSDYKE DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: ST 570 600 Area: 565.2 (ha) 1396.6 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 172 1:10,000: ST 55 NE, ST 56 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1971 Date of Last Revision: 1974

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 Date of Last Revision:

Other Information:

Site area increased since last Revision. Nature Conservation Review Grade 2 Site.

Description

The site consists of an expanse of open water (the largest artificial freshwater lake in South West England) with peripheral areas of reedbed, carr, woodland and neutral grassland. The sparse submerged vegetation is composed largely of Fennel Pondweed (Potamogeton pectinatus), Lesser Pondweed (Potamogeton pusillus), Opposite-leaved Pondweed (Groenlandia densa) and Water Crowfoots (Ranunculus spp.).

The site is an internationally important staging post for migratory birds, especially waders, terns, warblers and hirundines. The grasslands and reedbeds are a critical autumn feeding ground for Reed Warblers (Acrocephalus scirpaceus) and Sedge Warblers (A. schoenobaenus), and the lake is one of the most important inland waters in Britain for wintering wildfowl. Chew Valley Lake supports good populations of Shoveler (Anas clypeata) (mean winter peak: 490) and Gadwall (Anas strepera) (210), and nationally important numbers of Teal (Anas crecca) (1750) and Tufted Duck (Aythya fuligula) (570). Other species over-wintering include Goldeneye (Bucephala clangula), Wigeon (Anas penelope), Snipe (Gallinago gallinago), Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) and Redshank (Tringa totanus). Up to 50 broods of Great Crested Grebe (Podiceps cristatus) and 28 of Little Grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis) are raised annually; autumn numbers of Great Crested Grebe (400) are the highest in Britain. Duck species breeding regularly include Gadwall, Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos), Shoveler, Pochard (Aythya ferina), Tufted Duck, Ruddy Duck (Oxyura jamaicensis) and Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna). The lake also supports up to 42,000 roosting Black-headed Gull (Larus ridibundus), Common Gull (Larus canus) and Lesser Blackbacked Gull (Larus fuscus). A total of 247 species of bird have been recorded.

Traditionally managed pasture and hay meadows on Keuper Marls and Head Deposits are included in the site. Plants associated with neutral soils include Pepper-saxifrage (Silau silaus), Burnet-saxifrage (Pimpinella saxifraga) and Devil's-Bit Scabious (Succisa pratensis), with Fairy Flax (Linum catharticum), Salad Burnet (Sanguisorba minor) and Dwarf Thistle (Cirsium acaule) in more calcareous areas. There is a colony of several thousand Green-winged Orchid (Orchis morio), and abundant Cowslip (Primula veris), Spiny Restharrow (Ononis spinosa) and Dyer's Greenweed (Genista tinctoria). Hedgerows support the nationally rare Bithynian Vetch (Vicia bithynica).

This citation / map relates to a site entered in the Register of European sites for Great Britain.

Register reference number VK001004

Date of registration 30 JAN 1996

Signed Buse

on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Environment