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the Register of European sites for Great Britain.  
Register reference number UK00511  
Date of registration 30 JAN 1996

Signed Bull  
on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Environment

File Ref: SD 41/2

COUNTY: LANCASHIRE

SITE NAME: MARTIN MERE, BURSCOUGH

DISTRICT: WEST LANCASHIRE

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

Local Planning Authority: West Lancashire District Council

National Grid Reference: SD 420146 Area: 119.3 (ha.) 294.8 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 108 1:10,000: SD 41 NW, SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1979 Date of Last Revision: -

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 Date of Last Revision: 1984

Other Information:

1. The site boundary has been amended by minor corrections. The area has also been corrected as the acreage given on the 1979 notification was incorrect.
2. This is a Wildfowl Trust Reserve.

Reasons for Notification:

Martin Mere is a low-lying wetland complex of open-water, marsh and grassland habitats overlying deep peat. It is situated to the north of Burscough and occupies part of the site of the old Martin Mere which, prior to drainage, was probably the largest lake in Lancashire. Following acquisition by the Wildfowl Trust in 1974, the rough-grazed pasture of a decade ago has been transformed by positive management techniques into a reserve of international importance for waterfowl.

The principal interest of the site lies in the numbers of migrant birds which it supports during the winter months, with overall numbers of wildfowl regularly in excess of 10,000 and over 100 different species using the Mere as a wintering ground. Of particular importance are the wintering populations of pink-footed geese (up to 18,000), teal (5,000-10,000) and pintail (1000-2500) which, by representing more than 1% of their total NW European populations, reinforce the international status of this site.

Martin Mere also supports nationally important numbers of Bewick's swan, gadwall, mallard, whooper swan and shoveler with numbers regularly well in excess of 1% of the total British wintering population. Nationally exceptional numbers of snipe, Lapwing and black-tailed godwit have been recorded and the wintering flock of ruff (350 on average) is believed to be the largest in Britain.

The breeding community is diverse, totalling over 35 species, and includes important breeding populations of greylag goose (representing over 1% of the British breeding population), gadwall, mallard and snipe.

In total, over 150 species of birds have been recorded at the site and this includes several unusual species, such as avocet, lesser yellowlegs, pratincole, marsh sandpiper and white-winged black tern which have been recorded on passage. Martin Mere is, thus, of exceptional value for the wealth and diversity of its avifauna.

Additional scientific interest is provided by the presence of two locally important plant species: water dropwort (Oenanthe fistulosa) which is regionally scarce and whorled caraway (Carum verticillatum) found here in abundance in its only Lancashire locality and one of very few sites in the north of England.