

County: Hertfordshire **Site Name:** Croxley Common Moor

District: Three Rivers

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

Local Planning Authority: Three Rivers District Council

National Grid Reference: TQ 083949 **Area:** 39.5 (ha) 97.6 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1: 50 000: 176 **1: 10 000:** TQ 09 NE, SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1969 **Date of Last Revision:** 1972

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 **Date of Last Revision:** -

Other Information:

The majority of the site is a Registered Common.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Croxley Common Moor is an extensive area of grass heath on freely draining sandy soils of the Colne Gravels adjacent to the River Gade. A variety of soil types, from acidic to fairly basic, supports a rich assemblage of plant species. The grassland types represented here include examples which are nowhere common in Britain and others which have been significantly reduced in area nationally through drainage and agricultural change. Towards the western end of the site drainage becomes poor and the grassland grades into marshy areas with tall fen vegetation.

Dominating the species rich turf are Sheeps Sorrel *Rumex acetosella*, Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris*, Sheep's Fescue *Festuca ovina*, Mouse ear Hawkweed *Hieracium pilosella* and Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*. The freely draining conditions also support abundant Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, Common Cat's-ear *Hypochoeris radicata* and Common Bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* with Betony *Stachys officinalis* more locally distributed. The botanical interest is enhanced by frequent Petty Whin *Genista anglica* and Dyer's Greenweed *G. tinctoria* and occasional Heather *Calluna vulgaris*. More basic conditions and active ant hills support Purging Flax *Linum catharticum* and Large Thyme *Thymus pulegioides*. Scattered scrub of Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, Broom *Cytisus scoparius* and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* adds structural diversity to the site.

Rushes *Juncus spp.* and Sedges *Carex spp.* dominate the wetter areas with tufted Hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* and Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*. A county rarity, fen bedstraw

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Croxley Common Moor (Cont.)

Galium uliginosum is also present. The tall fen is characterised by Reed Sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Lesser pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis* and Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*.