CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

SWANSEA **SLUXTON MARSH, WHITEMOOR**

Date of Notification: 2001

National Grid Reference: SS 428 900

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 159
1:10,000 Sheet number: SS49 SW

Site Area: 7.5 ha

Description:

Sluxton Marsh, Whitemoor is of special interest for its marshy grassland and mixture of associated habitats, including reedbed, swamp and acidic flush, with scattered blocks of willow *Salix* species scrub. It is also of special interest for its population of the nationally rare southern damselfly *Coenagrion mercuriale*, associated with a series of water-courses which cross the site.

The site lies adjacent to Rhossili Down SSSI, at Whitemoor, overlooking Llangennith, near the western end of the Gower peninsula. It comprises a single large field on uneven ground, with a gentle north-westerly aspect, between 50 to 70 m. Soils are wet loamy cambic stagnohumic gleys, with a peaty surface layer. These lie on glacial Boulder Clay over Carboniferous Limestone, on the edge of an area of Old Red Sandstone conglomerate.

The site supports various forms of marshy grassland, which are both floristically and structurally variable; transitions between the types are well displayed. The majority is dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, accompanied by a variety of tall rushes, fine–leaved grasses, short sedges and herbs. These include sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, carnation sedge *Carex panicea* and tormentil *Potentilla erecta*. In places the bog-myrtle *Myrica gale* is prominent. Of particular interest are stands of fen-meadow, where the base-demanding tawny sedge *Carex hostiana* and flea sedge *C. pulicaris* are frequent and the vegetation is generally more species-rich than the associated purple moor-grass pasture.

The remaining marshy grassland is dominated by sharp-flowered rush and is widespread throughout the site. The stands of rush-pasture include frequent common marsh bedstraw *Galium palustre*, greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and tormentil, with locally abundant purple moor-grass.

In the south of the site is an area of acid flush associated with the marshy grassland, dominated by sharp-flowered rush and purple moor-grass, with frequent bog-moss *Sphagnum* species and occasional bog-myrtle.

Other vegetation at Sluxton Marsh, Whitemoor includes scattered blocks of scrub and small areas

of reedbed and swamp, which add to the site's ecological diversity. The reedbed is dominated by common reed *Phragmites australis*, with associates such as purple moor-grass, smooth-stalked sedge *Carex laevigata*, bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and broad buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilitata*. The swamp is dominated by greater tussock-sedge *Carex paniculata*.

Notable plant species include a population of royal fern *Osmunda regalis*, growing along ditch banks, in swamp and in the more tussocky purple moor-grass pasture.

The southern damselfly is associated with runnels and drains across the site, particularly those which are shallow, warm and permanently flowing. It is is part of a population centred on the adjacent Rhossili Down SSSI.

Remarks:

1. The site supports vegetation assignable to the *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils *Molinion caeruleon*. This habitat is listed on Annex I of the EC Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna).

2. The southern damselfly is included on Annex IIa of the EC Habitats Directive and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (fully protected). It is on Appendix II of the Bern Convention, listed as rare in the GB red list and is a short list Biodiversity Action Plan species.

3. The SSSI is included within the Gower Commons Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

4. The site lies within the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).