

COUNTY: EAST SUSSEX SITE NAME: ARLINGTON RESERVOIR

DISTRICT: WEALDEN

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The whole site is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

Local Planning Authority: WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 535075 Area: 99.4 (ha.) 245.6 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheets 1:50,000: 199 1:10,000: TQ 50 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): – Date of Last Revision: –

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

Other Information:

New site.

Reasons for Notification:

Arlington Reservoir is an important ornithological site. In recent years the numbers of wintering wigeon have exceeded 1% of the total UK population. In addition over 170 species of birds on passage have been recorded and the number of wintering birds regularly exceeds 10,000 individuals.

The wigeon is one of several subarctic ducks which appear to have colonised Britain during the cooler climatic phase of the nineteenth century. They now regularly breed in Scotland and parts of Northern England but fly south to overwinter on areas of open water where they feed on sub-surface vegetation. In recent years the population of wigeon on Arlington Reservoir has exceeded 2,000 individuals. Other wintering birds include shoveler, tufted duck, teal, whitefronted geese and pintail. Some of the most notable passage birds are black throated diver, great northern diver and hen harrier.

The reservoir is of recent origin and the fringing vegetation is not yet fully developed. Alder *Alnus glutinosa* and willow *Salix* species fringe parts of the open water and are backed by dense scrub of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and gorse *Ulex europaeus*. The more open areas support neutral grassland in which the grasses cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* and creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera* are dominant together with a range of herbs including false fox sedge *Carex otrubae*, horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica* and common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*. Fertile, grazed, grassland east of the reservoir are valuable additional feeding grounds for birds.

Although the River Cuckmere, which runs through the site, is partly canalised, there are some areas of tall fen and emergent vegetation. Common reed *Phragmites australis* is dominant in places but elsewhere more diverse fen communities include branched

burreed *Sparganium erectum*, marsh bedstraw *Galium palustre*, orange balsam *Impatiens capensis*, water mint *Mentha aquatica* and marsh woundwort *Stachys palustris*. Arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia* is a notable plant found in more open water.

The exposed shingle lying above the reservoir's high water mark is gradually being colonised by such plants as scentless mayweed *Tripleurospermum maritimum*, curled dock *Rumex crispus* and persicaria *Polygonum persicaria*.