

Guidelines for the selection of County Wildlife Sites in Somerset

Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation

FOURTH WORKING DRAFT - NOVEMBER 1991

Approved by the SERC Management Group, December 1991

HABITAT GUIDELINES

1. COASTLAND

- 1.1. All saltmarshes > 1 ha. except severely degraded (for definition see footnote)
- 1.2. All sand-dunes except severely degraded.
- 1.3. All shingle beaches if partially vegetated
- 1.4. All sea cliffs and cliff tops excluding development and severely degraded sites.

2. WOODLAND

Include:

- 2.1. All ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland (use NCC provisional inventory) sites >2 ha. (unless post inventory field survey has revealed severe degradation).
- 2.2. Sites shown as wooded (i.e. wooded or plantation) on the Tithe Map >0.5 ha. and ≤ 2 ha. if field survey since 1985 has confirmed extant predominantly broadleaved (semi-natural or plantation) and at least 8 ancient woodland indicators.
- 2.3. Broadleaved plantation on ancient woodland sites > 2 ha. and tithe woodland still semi-natural >2 ha. if post 1985 field survey has confirmed at least 5 ancient woodland indicators.
- 2.4. Conifer plantation on ancient woodland or tithe sites > 2 ha. if post 1985 survey has confirmed at least 5 ancient woodland indicators or coniferisation less than 30 years old or failing or rides with >30 plant species.
- 2.5. Secondary woodland/broadleaved plantation >2 ha. with 80+ vascular plant species or well developed structure/ride and glade system or 8 ancient woodland indicators.

- Notes:*
1. "recent records" means 5 years old or less i.e. in the year 1990 1 January 1985 should be regarded as the cut off point, in 1991 use January 1986 etc.
 2. patchworks of conifer and broadleaved - refer to SSSI Guidelines for guidance on whether conifer areas should be omitted or included. Normally blocks of solid conifer >3 ha. should be excluded, but good rides through the blocks may be retained.
 3. "Severely degraded" means that if the site management were to be immediately changed to the optimum the site would be unlikely to regain most of its previous nature conservation interest within 10 years.

3. GRASSLAND

3.1 All sites >0.5 ha. except severely degraded examples of the following NVC communities:

Mesotrophic	Calcicolous	Calcifugous
MG4	CG1	U1
MG5	CG2	U2
MG8	CG3	U3
MG11	CG4	
MG12	CG5	
MG13	CG6	
	CG7	

or where NVC community analysis is not available:

3.2 Semi-natural mesotrophic/calcareous/calcifugous grassland sites >0.5 ha. with either a high non-ruderal forb content or a number of species indicative of the above NVC community types (drawing on indicator lists from VEGAN and NVC constancy tables).

4. LOWLAND HEATHLAND

4.1 All areas of heathland area >1 ha. (>10% Calluna cover).

5. NON-MONTANE ROCK HABITATS

In Somerset examples of nature conservation interest will be included in County Wildlife Sites chosen by other criteria.

6. FRESHWATER HABITATS

6.1 STANDING WATERS (Lakes, ponds, gravel-pits, reservoirs and canals).

6.1.1. Sites with higher than average number of submerged floating and emergent plant species for a community type (see SSSI Selection Guidelines. Table 12. p. 125) or with species that indicate that the site is likely to fall in this category.

6.1.2. Sites with > or = 4 Potamogeton species.

6.1.3. All mesotrophic sites except severely degraded.

6.1.4. Sites with a transition from freshwater to saline conditions except severely degraded.

6.1.5. Marl water bodies (alkalinity >100 mg/l CaCO₃)

6.2 LOWLAND DITCH SYSTEMS

6.2.1. Complex interconnected ditch systems (excluding completely shaded ditches) >1km. in total ditch length where at least 25% of the wet ditches are rated as "good" or "exceptional" (see SSSI Guidelines p119 for definitions) (include grasslands/arable between ditches as buffer zone even if improved.)

6.3 FLOWING WATERS (Rivers and Streams)

Use key in SSSI Guidelines, Table 17 (p.133)

6.3.1. The best example in the county of a whole river from source to saline limit of each river type (see SSSI Guidelines P.121) (Consult neighbouring counties on cross boundary catchments).

6.3.2. Sections of rivers/streams with either:-

6.3.2.1. Particular vegetation/botanical interest (e.g. > or = 5 Somerset notables in a 1km length).

6.3.2.2. A minimum of modification to bed and water level and a high proportion of semi-natural habitats on both banks.

6.3.2.3. > or = 2 species (confirmed records) indicating high biological quality:

Dipper
Kingfisher
Otter
Water vole
Water shrew
European crayfish
Stoneflies

7. FENS

7.1 All tall herb fens and *Carex rostrata* mire > or = 0.5 ha. (see SSSI Guidelines Table 18 p.150).

7.2 All swamp communities > or 0.5 ha.

7.3 All mires > or 0.5 ha. listed in SSSI Guidelines, Table 18.

7.4 All fen meadows (as defined by NVC) > or = 0.5 ha. with > or = 25 vascular plant species.

8. BOGS (Raised bog, cut-over raised bog)

8.1 All sites with raised bog communities

8.2 Cut-over raised bog sites where hydrology is linked with adjacent wetland County Wildlife Sites.

9. UPLAND HABITATS

9.1 All sites > or = 2 ha. with upland communities listed in SSSI Guidelines, Table 22 except severely degraded sites, except where communities have further qualifying criteria elsewhere (e.g. U4 see grasslands) and except community U20 (Bracken). Bracken communities should only be selected if they have a diverse vernal flora including e.g. *Viola* spp. (Note species number to be defined after records analysis).

10. MOSAIC SITES

10.1 Sites with 2 or more semi-natural habitats in mosaic where individually one or more of the habitats may fail to meet County Wildlife Site criteria on single habitat or notable species grounds

11. ARTIFICIAL HABITATS

11.1. Disused Quarries - usually assessed on other criteria, but sites which demonstrate good examples of active succession may be included with numbers of notable species slightly lower than otherwise required.

11.2. Disused mining sites - sites >0.5 ha. with flora showing adaptations to heavy metal-rich soils.

11.3. Other types of artificial habitat (below) must qualify under other habitat or species criteria.

Arable land (including set-aside)
Improved grassland
Orchards
Hedgerows
Green lanes
Dry stone walls
Road verges
Disused railways
Disused airfields
Parks
Golf courses
Gardens
Cemetaries
Churchyards
Tips
Sewage works
Industrial sites
Derelict land
Disused buildings

These sites, where they do not meet County Wildlife Site criteria, may be selected as sites of local importance.

SPECIES GUIDELINES

[0.1] Sites with 8 or more Somerset notable species of >1 species group.

1. VASCULAR PLANTS

1.1 All sites with 1 or more RDB species.

1.2 Sites with 5 or more Somerset notable species.

1.3 Sites with 1 or more nationally rare, nationally scarce or regionally rare species (< or = 15 localities in SW region, locality = < or = 1km).

2. NON-VASCULAR PLANTS (Lichen, bryophytes, fungi charophytes)

2.1 Sites with 5 or more Somerset notable species (or NIEC species).

2.2 Sites with 1 or more RDB, nationally rare, nationally scarce or regionally rare species.

3. MAMMALS

3.1 Otter

3.1.1. All confirmed recent holt and lying-up sites.

3.1.2. River catchments in regular recent use, including all banksides wetland, scrub and woodland.

3.2 Bats

Guidelines to be reviewed with advice of Somerset Bat Group)

3.2.1. All known recent Greater and Lesser Horseshoe breeding sites, together with contiguous semi-natural habitat.

3.2.2. All winter roosts where 5+ Horseshoe bats have been recorded since 1985.

3.2.3 . All breeding roosts of Barbastelle, Bechsteins, Grey Long-eared, Natterers, Daubentons, Whiskered, Brandts, Serotine, Noctule and Leisiers.

3.3 Dormouse

All sites with records post 1985.

3.4 Badger

Badger setts will be recorded separately from the County Wildlife Site system. Bagder setts on their own will not justify County Wildlife Site status.

3.5 Water vole

All sites with recent records.

3.6 Harvest mouse

All sites with recent records.

4. BIRDS

4.1 Sites with >0.5% total British breeding population of any native species.

4.2 All breeding sites used since 1985 of the following species (excluding introductions):

Barn Owl
Bearded Reedling
Bittern
Black-Tailed Godwit
Cettis Warbler
Cirl Bunting
Curlew
Gadwall
Grasshopper Warbler
Grey Heron (> 2 nest in 1 year)
Hobby
Kingfisher
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Long-Eared Owl
Marsh Harrier
Merlin
Nightingale
Nightjar
Peregrine Falcon
Pochard
Raven
Redshank
Ring Ouzel
Sand Martin
Snipe
Stone Chat
Tufted Duck
Wheatear
Willow Tit
Woodcock
Yellow Wagtail

(list based on national and county rarity)

4.3 Sites with 3 or more recent breeding Somerset notable species.

4.4 Sites with 5 or more recent Somerset notables

4.5 Sites which regularly have held, recently, more than 0.25% of total British non-breeding population of a species.

4.6 Sites which regularly support bird species of European importance.

5. REPTILES

Sites with records of 3 reptile species since 1985.

6. AMPHIBIANS

6.1 Sites with "good population" of Warty Newt (see SSSI Guidelines, p.268 for definition) including garden ponds but excluding introductions.

6.2 Sites with assemblage score of > or = 3 (see reference above).

7. INVERTEBRATES

7.1 Sites included in NCC's Invertebrate Site Register, subject to NCC rules on disregarding old records being consistent with SERC practice.

7.2 Sites with the following habitat features:

7.2.1. Ancient trees with dead and decaying wood

7.2.2. Large river shingle banks

7.2.3. South-facing bare ground/ sandy exposures

7.2.4. Unstable soft rock coastal cliffs where invertebrate survey has indicated special species assemblages.

7.3 Sites with a recently recorded RDB species. Older records will be accepted if the record is reliable, extinction at the site is not confirmed and the relevant habitat is still extant at that site.

7.4 Sites with 5 or more Somerset notable species recorded since 1985 (nationally rare or scarce species for all groups except butterflies and dragonflies).

7.5 All site with any of the following butterfly species recorded since 1985 (include re-introductions but not introductions or single casual records):-

Adonis Blue
Brown Hairstreak
Chalkhill Blue
Dark Green Fritillary
Duke of Burgundy Fritillary
Marsh Fritillary
Pearl-Bordered Fritillary
Purple Emperor
Small Blue
Small Pearl-Bordered Fritillary
White Admiral
White Letter Hairstreak
Wood White

List based on combination of lists of nationally scarce species, butterflies which have experienced substantial local declines (SSSI Selection Guidelines) and county rarity.

7.6 Sites with any nationally scarce dragonfly species recorded since 1985 (except introductions and single casual records).

7.7 Site with outstanding assemblages of dragonflies - > or = 10 species recorded since 1985.

ENDS