



*CARAVAN CLUB ECOLOGICAL  
SITE APPRAISAL*



**Incleboro Fields Caravan Club Site  
Station Close  
West Runton  
Cromer  
NR27 9QG  
England**



**General Information**

**Site Name and County:** Incleboro Fields, Cromer, Norfolk

**Grid Reference:** TG 185423

**Area:** 8.5ha

**Date:** 14/07/04

**Recorder:** Rodney West and Harriet Whittle, Ecologists with Just Ecology Environmental Consultancy.

**Weather Conditions:** Warm but overcast with sunny spells.

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### **Site Description**

An extensive hillside site with tarmac roads leading to gravel pitches, which are surrounded by mown grass. The blocks of pitches are interspersed with small areas of planted woodland and natural gorse scrub, all of which is well established, giving the site a secluded feel. To the north west of the site is an open, mown grass area with less secluded pitches.

### **Context**

This coastal site is surrounded by mature oak woodland to the south and west and a large tract of gorse heath to the east. Northwards the site is bordered by a golf club. Only a mile from the coast, this site is close to the village of West Runton which has a railway station. Cromer is nearby. Just over a mile south of the site is Felbrigg Woods SSSI, designated on account of the extensive native beech woodland, important lichen flora and ornithological and entomological interest.



### **Habitat Information**

**Broad Habitats Present:** Amenity grassland, broadleaved woodland, gorse scrub.

**BAP Priority Habitats Present:** Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (a Broad BAP habitat).

**Subsidiary Habitats Present:** Dead wood

### **Plant Communities Present:**

#### **Grassland Communities:**

The grassland between the pitches is a species poor perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*) sward, with occasional daisy (*Bellis perennis*) and white clover (*Trifolium repens*) in western areas of the site, where there are free-draining heathy soils. In places beside the gorse heath the dry sandy banks contained ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), common cat's ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), wood sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), polytrichum moss and occasional bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) fronds.

Grassland at the woodland edges in the southern corner of the site was slightly more diverse. Spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), meadow thistle (*C. dissectum*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*), small-flowered crane's-bill (*Geranium pusillum*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), hop trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*), bird's foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*), sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*), common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), wood sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*).

A small area of rough grassland on a bank leading up to Fair Lady Terrace contained planted shrubs such as bird cherry (*Prunus padus*) and sweet chestnut. Broom (*Sarothamnus scoparius*) has come in naturally but the grassland was species poor containing mainly yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*)

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and common cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*). Gorse woodland borders this area at the northern edge.

### **Woodland:**

The southern end of the site is surrounded by mature broadleaf woodland and a number of pitches are placed in small glades at the edge of the wood. The canopy of the woodland is predominantly pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*), with scattered silver birch (*Betula pendula*), sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), young sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), with occasional pine (*Pinus* spp.), yew (*Taxus baccata*) and rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*). The shrub layer is well developed and comprises holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), ivy (*Hedera helix*), rowan, elder (*Sambucus nigra*), and young trees with a ground flora dominated by bramble and bracken. Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), nettle, cleavers (*Galium aparine*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), yorkshire fog, common bent and annual meadow grass were noted in the field layer. Dead wood present will provide valuable habitat for invertebrates.

This woodland forms a continuous tract with Felbrigg Woods SSSI which is just over one mile south of the site, although it is dissected by the A148.

### **Hedgerows:**

There were no hedgerows as such on site, although the more open western and eastern sides of the site were divided into small enclosures using either natural gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) scrub or plantings of native trees and shrubs. On the eastern side these areas comprised species such as pine (*Pinus* spp.), rowan, dense bramble, blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), honeysuckle, gorse and broom. Groundflora below the gorse scrub heath was either dense bracken litter or grassy with species such as common bent, ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), bluebell, wood sage and sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*).

At Ketton Row the planting was predominantly bird cherry (*Prunus padus*), pine, rowan, holly, oak and hawthorn with an understorey of bracken and bracken litter.

On the more open western side of the site, strips of young trees were becoming well established and providing a screen between pitches. The main species are oak, red sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus purpureum*), silver birch, rowan and guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*). At the end of Kettle Grove where the track left the site and led onto the golf course, mature holly trees and a hedge containing hawthorn, holly, elm and ivy was noted.

### **Gorse Heath:**

Blocks of gorse heath occurred throughout the site, often as screening between small blocks of pitches, and was also present along the western edge of the site. In several places broom was scattered amongst the gorse. Bracken occurred either as an understorey or at the edge of the gorse blocks. Beyond the site boundary was dense gorse heath, part of the National Trust owned area. Further south along same boundary, the gorse heath grades into a silver birch (*Betula pendula*) and elm (*Ulmus glabra*) linear woodland with bracken and bramble scrub. Again gorse heath occurs beyond the site boundary.

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In other areas stands of dense gorse and broom occurred with occasional rosebay willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*), ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), yorkshire fog, white clover, common cat's-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*), white bryony (*Bryonia dioica*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), elder and common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*).

**Wetland:**

There were no wetland habitats on site.



Small tortoiseshell butterfly



Yarrow



**Habitat Evaluation**

The grassland bordering the woodland at the south of the site is reasonably diverse and provides good quality habitat for feeding insects and birds. The grassland between the pitches is of little value, being closely mown and rather desiccated. The broad-leaved woodland provides valuable feeding and nesting habitat for birds and small mammals including bats, particularly as it has a good shrub layer. It forms part of a large tract of semi-natural woodland, part of which is the Felbrigg Woods SSSI, south of the site. Gorse heath and associated dry grassland banks provide cover and potential basking areas for reptiles and also seeds for birds such as linnets and other finches. Gorse and broom are also an important nectar source for flying insects. Native shrub planting throughout the site is beginning to mature and provide valuable bird habitat. It would benefit from a diversification in height and structure in places.



## Species Information

**BAP Species Seen:** Linnet

**BAP Species Potential:** Broad-leaved woodland at the southern edge of the site contained mature trees with potential bat roosts. Pipistrelle and other bats are likely to be present. These are listed as Priority species in the UK and Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plans.

**Other Notable Species:** Buff-tailed bumble bee (*Bombus terrestris*) and yellow hammer which is on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern.

### **Flora:**

The grassland areas are generally species-poor and of little value botanically. On grassy banks forming an edge to the gorse heath, a slightly more interesting acid grassland flora has developed, although this is not botanically rich. Grassland adjacent to the woodland in the south of the site was damper and contained a better diversity of flowering plant species. There is potential to improve diversity in this area with a more sympathetic mowing regime. Gorse heath was generally species-poor but provides an important habitat for various birds, insects and reptiles. The broad-leaved semi-natural woodland was in good condition with a well-developed shrub layer and ground flora. Broadleaved woodland is a priority habitat listed in the UK and Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plans. The linear planting is predominantly native in origin.

### **Avifauna:**

On the day of the survey 16 species of birds were recorded on the site. These were birds that would usually be found in the two principal habitats – heathland and deciduous woodland- that surround the site. Many of the species will breed in the surrounding area and some will breed within the site. Two species; linnet and yellow hammer are of particular note (see Appendices 1 & 2).

Bird species recorded during the survey visit were;

Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)  
Blue Tit (*Parus caeruleus*)  
Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*)  
Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)  
Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)  
Common Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*)  
Great Tit (*Parus major*)  
Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)  
Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*)  
Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*)  
Magpie (*Pica pica*)  
Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*)  
Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)  
Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)  
Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)  
Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*)

### **Invertebrates:**

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On the day of the survey meadow brown (*Maniola jurtina*) and small tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*) were seen but several other species probably also occur. Various day-flying moth species were recorded. Buff-tailed bumble-bee (*Bombus terrestris*) was seen nectar gathering. The dead wood under the woodland areas provides suitable habitat for invertebrates, particularly detritivores and other litter dwellers. Dry sandy soils beneath and adjacent to gorse heath are also likely to be important areas for invertebrates and reptiles, particularly the sparsely vegetated areas.

Seen during the survey;  
Meadow brown (*Maniola jurtina*)  
Small tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*)  
Various day flying moths  
Buff-tailed bumble-bee (*Bombus terrestris*)

### **Herpetofauna:**

No species of herpetofauna were recorded during the survey but the surrounding heathland would probably hold common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*), slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and adder (*Vipera berus*) and these may well come onto the site. There is anecdotal evidence of adders on the site.

### **Mammals:**

Both rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) and mole (*Talpa europaea*) were recorded during the survey visit but other small mammals like long-tailed fieldmouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) and field vole (*Microtus agrestis*) probably use the site as will stoat (*Mustela erminea*) and weasel (*Mustela nivalis*).

Certain species of bats may use the site for foraging and some may roost in convenient trees on the site or adjacent woodland. These will probably be pipistrelle bats (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), which are an LBAP species for Norfolk and also listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Although it remains the most abundant and widespread bat species in the UK, the pipistrelle is thought to have undergone a significant decline in numbers this century. Estimates from the National Bat Colony Survey suggest a population decline of approximately 70% between 1978 and 1993. The current pre-breeding population estimate for the UK stands at approximately 2,000,000. Other species such as natterer's bat (*Myotis natterii*) a woodland edge species, may also visit the site.

The species recorded during the survey were:

Mole (*Talpa europaea*)  
Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)



### Species Evaluation

The grassland around the pitches is species-poor and is kept short by frequent mowing, thus it is of little value in biodiversity terms. Grassland at the fringes of the site, bordering the gorse heath and the woodland has a slightly higher floral diversity, providing a nectar source for butterflies, bees and other flying insects. All grassland is also used by grazing rabbits.

Gorse heath provides nesting and feeding habitat for a range of birds, particularly seed eating species such as linnet, yellow hammer and finches. It is also used as a nectar source for butterflies and other flying insects and also by reptiles for cover and basking.

The woodland and glades at the south of the site have good age structure, providing shelter and feeding opportunities for birds such as chaffinch and owls. Small mammals such as bats, grey squirrels and voles are likely to use the woodland habitat as well as invertebrates which utilise dead wood. Mature trees have roost sites for bats. Foxes may also be present.

### Management Recommendations

- **Nestboxes** – both open-fronted and conventional single hole (32mm diam.) could be added to selective trees in the secluded areas of the site and possibly extended into some of the surrounding woodland. One or two owl boxes may also be beneficial. Nestboxes need cleaning out once each autumn.
- **Bird feeding stations** –Feeding stations could be added at three or four sites throughout the site. Two or three feeders at each station could hold a variety of food. One with niger seed; one with husked sunflower seed and a third with general purpose food plus fat balls. Large plastic dishes are available to place beneath feeders to catch most of the fallen debris, these can be cleaned periodically.
- **Habitat piles** - When cutting grass or hardwood, cut and stack in ‘habitat piles’ in out of the way places – in sunny areas if possible. These will provide homes for beetles, hedgehogs and possibly slow worms. Try not to burn material.
- **Bats** - If any mature trees are marked for cutting down it is advisable to get them checked by a bat expert.
- **Grassland** – There is some opportunity to diversify grassland bordering woodland edge by less frequent mowing (twice a year in April and September). It is important to remove grass cuttings to keep fertility of the soil low, this prevents any one species becoming dominant and encourages greater floral diversity. Many invertebrates, including the caterpillars of butterflies and moths, feed on grasses.
- Long grass is also favoured by many small mammals, reptiles and amphibians which in turn will attract kestrels, owls and other predators. Bats frequently hunt

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for insects over long grass. A variety of lengths will produce a range of habitats and species assemblages.

**Further Surveys:**

Further surveys of bats recommended

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## Appendix 1 - The Population Status of UK Birds

The leading governmental and non-governmental conservation organisations in the UK have reviewed the population status of the birds that are regularly found here.

A total of 247 species have been assessed and each placed onto one of three lists – red, amber or green. Forty species are **red-listed**, 121 are **amber-listed** and 86 are **green-listed**.

The lists update earlier assessments, *Birds of conservation concern* and *Birds of conservation importance*, which were published in 1996. The population status of birds is reviewed every five years to keep track of changes in abundance and range.

### The Criteria

Seven quantitative criteria were used to assess the population status of each species and place it onto the red, amber or green list. These criteria are listed below. The review excluded species that are not native to the UK and those that occur irregularly as vagrants or scarce migrants.



Linnet



Yellowhammer

- **Red list** species are those that are Globally Threatened according to IUCN criteria; those whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years; and those that have declined historically and not shown a substantial recent recovery.
- **Amber list** species are those with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe, those whose population or range has declined moderately in recent years; those whose population has declined historically but made a substantial recent recovery; rare breeders; and those with internationally important or localised populations.
- Species that fulfil none of the criteria are **green-listed**.

The Linnet and Yellowhammer both of which were recorded at the Inceboro Fields site, are on the Red list of Birds of Conservation Concern.

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## Appendix 2 - Birds of Importance at Inceleboro Fields Site

**Linnet** is on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern and is therefore a species of high conservation importance in the UK. They are colonial nesters, and the gorse bushes found both within the site and the surrounding area probably support breeding birds. It is also a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

The linnet is common and widespread throughout the UK countryside, but there was a 56% reduction in numbers between 1968 and 1991. Most of the UK linnet population is resident and stay in the UK all year round, but some migrate to Spain and western France for the winter, and breeding birds from northern Europe spend the winter in the UK with the resident birds and could well use the site in winter.

Other farmland bird species that depend on the same diet have declined drastically at the same time as the linnet in both numbers and range. Linnets are more dependent on wildflower seeds than other seed-eaters during the breeding season, as chicks are fed exclusively on seeds rather than insects. The main cause of the linnet decline is thought to be changes in agricultural practices, including the use of herbicides and fertilisers, the reduction in farm diversity caused by intensification and farm specialisation, and the sowing of crops in the autumn rather than the spring, which results in the loss of winter stubbles, valuable sources of food for the linnet. In addition, suitable nesting habitat has been lost as a result of hedge, scrub and thicket removal, over-zealous hedge trimming and over-grazing

**Yellowhammer** is also on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern and is another species of high conservation importance in the U.K.

This species is wary, although not shy, and a high perch on a convenient tree is normally occupied whilst singing and holding territory in the breeding period. In winter, yellowhammers form flocks, often in mixed species groups with other seed-eating birds. They feed mainly on cereals and large grass seeds as well as the seeds of docks and other plants, which they typically pick from the ground

Like other species of bunting, this species, although still fairly common, has suffered following the widespread intensification of agriculture, including the large-scale removal of hedgerows and scrubland, and changes in land-use, reducing the availability of seeds in winter.

The Inceleboro Fields site probably attracts wintering flocks of finches including both Linnet and Yellowhammer and winter visitors such as; redwing, fieldfare and Scandinavian blackbirds.

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### Appendix 3 - Pipistrelle Bats

Certain species of bats may use the site for foraging (flying insects) and some may roost in convenient trees on the site or nearby. These will probably be pipistrelle bats (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*).

The common pipistrelle is the smallest British bat with a wingspan of about 20cms and weighing around six grams. It is the most abundant and widespread bat in Norfolk and throughout the UK and have suffered large losses in numbers over the last twenty years.

Although it remains the most abundant and widespread bat species in the UK, the pipistrelle is thought to have undergone a significant decline in numbers this century. Estimates from the National Bat Colony Survey suggest a population decline of approximately 70% between 1978 and 1993. The current pre-breeding population estimate for the UK stands at approximately 2,000,000.

Females form maternity roosts of up to several hundred adults from May, often in house roofs but also in woodland. They give birth to a single live young in July. Males are much more solitary. Hibernation takes place from November to March. Pipistrelles forage for small insects in varied habitats but woodland edges, hedgerows and waterways are particularly important.

The pipistrelle bat is listed on Appendix III of the Bern Convention, Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive and Appendix II of the Bonn Convention (and is included under the Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe). It is protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations, 1994 (Regulation 38) and Schedules 5 and 6 of the WCA 1981. It is also a priority species listed in the UK and Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plans.

Current threats to Bats:

- Exclusion from roosts by human intervention
- Destruction or damage to roosts as a result of building work/development
- Barn conversions and modifications to buildings such as security lights
- Toxic effects of remedial timber treatment in roofs and other parts of buildings
- Loss and damage to natural habitats such as woodlands and older trees with crevices and cavities.

Other bat species like natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*), a woodland edge specialist, may use the woodland edge habitat surrounding the Inleboro Fields site. This species is less common than the pipistrelle and is also listed in the UK and Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plans.