

County: North Yorkshire **Site Name:** Austwick and Lawkland Mosses

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

Local Planning Authority: Craven District Council

National Grid Reference: SD 762665

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 98 **1:10,000:** SD 76 NE

Area: 83.6 (ha) 206.6 (ac)

First Notified: 1958*

Date of Revision: 1984 and 1988 (26/5/88)

Description:

Austwick and Lawkland Mosses are two connected areas of peatland in the valley of the River Wenning, each much modified by past human activity and displaying, as a result, a wide range of habitats.

Austwick Moss is a raised mire in which peat cutting has reduced the depth of peat to 1-2 m, in places exposing the underlying shell marl. The resulting combination of acid bog and more calcareous hollows provides a mixture of ombrotrophic and poor fen communities in close proximity. Acidic pools and wet hollows are dominated by bog mosses *Sphagnum cuspidatum* and *S. recurvum*, with cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccus* and, more locally, bog rosemary *Andromeda polifolia*, sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* and the bog moss *Sphagnum magellanicum*. The drier surface of the bog has become colonised by downy birch *Betula pubescens*, bog myrtle *Myrica gale*, purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and a heather/bilberry *Calluna vulgaris/Vaccinium myrtillus* heathland. At the margin, birch carr gives way to poor fen in which the effect of the underlying shell marl is evident in a richer community containing marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, and northern marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella*. To the north and west of the Moss, there is an area of calcareous flush vegetation containing blunt-flowered rush *Juncus subnodulosus*, black bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans* and bird's-eye primrose *Primula farinosa*.

A similar but more varied range of habitats occurs on Lawkland Moss, including raised mire and birch woodland. Herb-rich grassland in the north and west of the site contains saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, betony *Stachys officinalis*, adder's-tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, dyer's greenwood *Genista tinctoria* and autumn crocus *Colchicum autumnale*. To the south-east are two large fields which in their eastern halves are managed as meadows and are dominated by rushes *Juncus acutiflorus* and *J. conglomeratus* and sedges *Carex nigra*, *C. echinata* and *C. disticha* with an abundance of flowering plant species such as ragged-robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica* and common marshbedstraw *Galium palustre*, but which in their western halves give way to rough grazing land which is more acidic with bog myrtle, common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, bottle sedge *Carex rostrata* and creeping willow *Salix repens*.

The mires are joined by a corridor of sedge-rich pastures valuable for breeding waders including snipe, redshank, lapwing and reed bunting. The site is an important locality for rare and local insects, notably the small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly.

Other Information:

1. Austwick Moss is listed in 'A Nature Conservation Review' edited by D. A. Ratcliffe (1977). Cambridge University Press; the inclusion of Lawkland Moss in the elite site has been approved subsequent to publication.
2. The site has been extended during the 1984 and 1988 revisions.

*Under Section 23 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949.