

25. Irthinghead Mires

Geographical Coordinates 55°04'N 2°22'W

Area 608ha

Location About 35km north-west of the city of Carlisle, in the counties of Cumbria and Northumberland, northern England.

Date of Ramsar Designation 17 July 1985.

Other International Designations None.

National Designations National Nature Reserve^P (NNR - Coom Rigg Moss, Grain Heads Moss); Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); Forest Park.

Principal Features A composite site embracing seven separate areas of mire (Gowany Knowe Moss, Felecia Moss, Coom Rigg Moss, Hummel Knowe Moss, Haining Head Moss, Grain Heads Moss, and Butterburn Flow) around the head of the River Irthing. The site contains internationally important examples of blanket mire, with a notable variety of *Sphagnum* mosses. Typical components of the vegetation also include *Calluna vulgaris*, *Erica tetralix*, *Empetrum nigrum*, *Vaccinium myrtillus*, *Eriophorum angustifolium*, *E. vaginatum*, *Andromeda polifolia*, *Narthecium ossifragum*, *Drosera rotundifolia*, *D. anglica* and *Trichophorum cespitosum*. Butterburn Flow supports breeding waders and several rare plants, whilst a rare spider, *Eboria caliginosa*, has been recorded at Coom Rigg Moss. (1a,2a,2b)

Conservation Issues The 1990 UK National Report stated that research carried out since 1987 had shown the mires to be gradually drying-out as a result of nearby afforestation. Management actions aimed at tackling this problem were being implemented in conjunction with the Forestry Commission.