59. Nene Washes

Geographical Coordinates:	52°34'N 0°13'W	**Area:**	1,310ha
Location:	Immediately east of the city of Peterborough, in the county of Cambridgeshire, eastern England.		
Date of Ramsar Designation:	5 March 1993		
Other International Designations:	European Union Special Protection Area		
National Designations:	Site of special scientific interest; River Nene eutrophic sensitive area[P]		

Principal Features: An extensive area of seasonally flooded wet grassland along the canalized lower River Nene. The area liable to inundation lies between flood protection embankments and is known as "washland". In addition to the seasonal wetland areas, the site also contains a substantial network of drainage ditches which remain wet throughout the year. Nationally scarce plants include *Nymphoides peltata, Potamogeton trichoides* and *Rumex palustris*, and there is a relict invertebrate fauna representative of the region's formerly extensive fenland. Four vulnerable or rare invertebrates have been recorded: the aquatic snail *Valvata macrostoma*, the water beetle *Agabus undulatus*, the dragonfly *Libellula fulva* and the hoverfly *Anasimyia interpuncta*. The site also holds a notable assemblage of breeding water birds, including *Anas strepera* (25 pairs), *A. querquedula* (5 pairs), *A. clypeata* (36 pairs), *Gallinago gallinago*, *Tringa totanus* and *Limosa limosa* (16 pairs). A diversity of wintering water birds includes internationally important numbers[1] of *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* (1,300). (Criteria 2a,3c).

[1]Figure refers to average peak count during the five winters 1987/88 to 1991/92.

Conservation Issues: The continued international importance of the site is dependent on the maintenance of a winter flooding regime and a high, but controlled, summer water table. The area may act as a refuge for birds displaced from the nearby Ouse Washes, when the latter site is flooded to an excessive depth. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) owns the site and implements a management plan which covers approximately half of its area. Hydrological management schemes phased in by the RSPB since 1985 have resulted in an increase in the number of wildfowl and waders. There is concern about the long term sustainability of summer water supplies in a region where demand for water (domestic and agricultural) is rising.