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Pevensy's Environment – The Levels

Pevensy Levels is a large fresh water habitat covering 3,603 hectares. It has a wide range of designations;

- The entire area is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). England now has more than 4,000 SSSIs covering 8% of the land area. Pevensy Levels were designated in 1990.
- Almost all of it – 3,585 hectares – has Ramsar designation. The Ramsar Convention is an international agreement signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, which provides for the conservation and good use of wetlands. The UK Government ratified the Convention and designated the first Ramsar sites in 1976. Pevensy Levels were designated in 1999.
- 184 hectares are also a National Nature Reserve (NNR) being part owned and managed by Sussex Wildlife Trust and Natural England



It is a large grazing marsh, providing open water and lowland grassland habitats, and is home to many species of wetland bird. Lapwings and redshanks are on the increase and it is one of the most important sites in Sussex for yellow wagtails.



But it is not just birds that make the Levels important. Nationally rare plants such as sharp-leaved pondweed and marshmallow are among several species that are now considered scarce.



Invertebrates are arguably even more important, the site being the best in England for freshwater molluscs, such as both the endangered Shining Ram's Horn snail and *Valvata Macrostroma*.



Whilst the snails may be small, the Fen Raft Spider and Great Silver Water Beetle are Britain's largest spider and beetle respectively, both growing to about 65mm long. Pevensy is one of only three UK sites where this spider is found. It lives on insects as well as catching small fish.



Hydrologically management of the Levels is complex, and the Environment Agency has to carefully control water levels all year round so as to prevent flooding whilst meeting the needs of wildlife and farmers

A detailed history of Pevensy Levels can be found in the History section at www.pevensey-bay.co.uk and links to some more detailed documents relating to Pevensy Levels can be found on the Environment page of the website; <http://www.pevensey-bay.co.uk/environment.html>