

COUNTY: KENT            SITE NAME: LULLINGSTONE PARK

DISTRICT: SEVENOAKS

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

Local Planning Authority: SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 513641    Area: 62 (ha.) 153 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 177    1:10,000: TQ 56 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1981

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1989

Other Information:

The boundary of the site has been amended at renotification and there are several small extensions and deletions.

Reasons for Notification:

This site includes old pollard trees and other woodland supporting important communities of invertebrates, lichens, breeding birds and fungi.

The woodland is dominated by very tall mature trees, particularly beech *Fagus sylvatica* as well as pedunculate and sessile oaks *Quercus robur* and *Q. petraea*, hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*. The ground vegetation is dominated by bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and sometimes bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. Some of the trees were planted in the 18th century, but many of the pollards are thought to be 400 or more years old. These trees are very large, with girths up to about 10 m (about 30 feet) but have not been polled for about 150 years. The bark of these ancient trees supports over 60 species of epiphytic ('growing harmlessly on plants') lichens. The lichen community, unusually rich for these pollution-sensitive organisms close to large urban areas, includes many typical of old forest, such as *Lecanactis lyncea* and *Enterographa crassa* on oaks and *Thelotrema lepadinum* on hornbeam.

The site's long continuity of woodland habitats including abundant dead-wood and many fungi has encouraged the development of a species-rich invertebrate fauna. Over 340 beetles have been recorded, including over 30 nationally scarce and 2 nationally rare species: a fairy-winged beetle *Ptenidium gressneri*, and a scirtid beetle *Prionocyphon serricornis*. More than 270 moths and butterflies are known to occur; the many scarce moths present include the barred hook-tip *Drepana cultraria* and the satin lutestrig *Tetheella fluctuosa*. A scarce money-spider *Porrhomma microphthalmum* and the scarce Roman snail *Helix pomatia* also occur. A number of the invertebrates found here have not been recorded elsewhere in Kent.

Over 500 species of fungi have been identified from this site including several rarely recorded in Britain and one, an *Amanita* species, which is new to science and has yet to be described and named.

The site's well developed woodland structure and the abundance of invertebrates has led to the presence of an outstanding community of breeding birds, including sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* and lesser-spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopus minor*.

Some formerly open areas have been colonised by scrub, especially hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and elder *Sambucus nigra*, though there remains a large population of adder's tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, a plant which is scarce in Kent.