

COUNTY: SOMERSET      SITE NAME: GREAT BREACH AND COPLEY WOODS

DISTRICT: SOUTH SOMERSET

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

Local Planning Authority: SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL, South Somerset District Council

National Grid Reference: ST 500320      Area: 64.8 (ha.) 160.0 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 182, 183      1:10,000: ST 43 SE, 53 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1972      Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Nature Conservation Review Woodland Site.

Owned and managed by the Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site consists of ancient and semi-natural broadleaved woodland. Two woodland types with a restricted distribution in Britain occur and the site supports a locally important invertebrate fauna. Additional interest lies in the fungi.

Great Breach and Copley Woods occupy the plateau and steep, west-facing slopes of the eastern end of the Polden Hills. Poorly-drained neutral to calcareous soils of the Worcester and Sherborne associations have developed on the underlying Lower Lias and Keuper Marl strata.

Two main woodland types can be distinguished in the areas of ancient woodland. Bunch Wood is dominated by Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Small-leaved Lime *Tilia cordata* with Field Maple *Acer campestre* and Hazel *Corylus avellana*. An area of Plateau Alderwood occurs in the southern part of the site with Alder *Alnus glutinosa* and Ash as co-dominants. Much of the remainder of Great Breach and Copley Woods was planted during the first half of the 19th Century with Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* and Ash. These areas have developed a high forest structure and despite their more recent origin have a rich understorey which includes Wayfaring tree *Viburnum lantana*, Guelder-rose *V. opulus*, Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and Spindle *Euonymus europaeus*. The ground flora is also of interest; with many species usually associated with ancient woodlands such as Spurge-laurel *Daphne laureola*, Herb-Paris *Paris quadrifolia*, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea* and Wood Millet *Milium effusum*. The rides support a rich flora which includes Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis* and Greater Butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*.

Great Breach and Copley Woods support a diverse invertebrate fauna and are one of the most important butterfly sites in Somerset. 29 resident breeding species have been recorded in recent years. The notable Duke of Burgundy *Hamearis lucina* is of particular interest. Moths are well represented and include the nationally rare *Ethmia terminella* and *Dystebenna stephensi*. Three nationally rare species of Hover Fly: *Cheilosia carbonaria*, *Xylota abiens* and *X. xanthocnema* are also present.

470 species of fungi have been recorded to date. Great Breach and Copley Woods are the only known British locality for *Lycophyllum konradianum*.