

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON 16 APRIL 1987

COUNTY: DORSET      SITE NAME: EAST COPPICE

DISTRICT: PURBECK

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

Local Planning Authority: PURBECK DISTRICT COUNCIL, Dorset County Council

National Grid Reference: SY 893942      Area: 4.8 (ha.) 11.9 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 195      1:10,000: SY 89 SE

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

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987      Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

New site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

East Coppice lies on moderately acidic London Clay and is a rare example of ancient woodland which has been continuously managed as coppice to the present day. The ground flora of this wood and its fauna, particularly its invertebrates are very rich, and include some rarities, reflecting this continuity of management.

The major coppice species is Hazel *Corylus avellana* with small amounts of Birch *Betula* sp. and Goat Willow *Salix caprea* and there are other shrubs such as Alder Buckthorn *Frangula alnus*, Red Currant *Ribes sylvestris* and Guelder Rose *Viburnum opulus*. Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* standards are sparsely distributed through the wood and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Aspen *Populus tremulus* and Holly *Ilex aquifolium* are found on the ancient enclosing banks.

The dominant flora of the woodland floor varies according to the age of the coppice above it. Under older stands, Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scriptus* and Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa* are the most obvious species and Ivy *Hedera helix* and Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* are much in evidence. Under young coppice there is a very rich assemblage of species in a sward dominated by Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris*. Here Common Violet *Viola riviniana*, Wood Spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, Common Cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense*, Saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and Betony *Stachys officinalis* are some of the more abundant species. These areas also contain fine stands of the nationally rare Narrow-leaved Lungwort *Pulmonaria longifolia* as well as Tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum* and Pale Sedge *Carex pallescens*, both very local and uncommon plants in Dorset.

The rides which are regularly mown have abundant Devil's-bit *Succisa pratensis* and Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*; there are strong colonies of Heath Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* and the local Bitter Vetch *Lathyrus montanus* is frequent on their margins. A small area of grassland adjacent to the coppice and with a rich flora is also included in the site. Here the dominant species are Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* and Tufted Hair Grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*; there are robust plants of the rare Narrow-leaved Lungwort and several sedges occur including the uncommon Pale Sedge.

The insect fauna of this wood, though not studied exhaustively, is known to be exceptionally rich and includes a number of species associated with long-established woodland. There are good populations of Pearl Bordered – and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries *Boloria euphrosyne* and *B. selene*, both rapidly declining butterflies and the coppice also holds the rare and attractive leaf rolling weevil *Byctiscus betulae* and another uncommon beetle *Apoderus coryli*. The birds of this site are typical of coppice woodland and include Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, a scarce breeding species in Dorset.