

SITE NOTIFIED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON 24 AUGUST 1987

CITATION

COUNTY: DEVON      SITE NAME: WHITCHURCH DOWN

DISTRICT: WEST DEVON

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

Local Planning Authority: DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL, West Devon Borough Council, Dartmoor National Park Authority

National Grid Reference: SX 507742      Area: 3.4 (ha.) 8.3 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 201      1:10,000: SX 57 SW

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

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

Other Information:

In Dartmoor National Park.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site contains an unusually herb-rich valley mire, together with a good variety of invertebrates, including some rarities.

At an altitude of approximately 140m the site is located within the shallow valley of a small tributary of the River Tavy. The site lies over impervious slates and several springs issue from the gentle slopes, resulting in waterlogged ground below.

The wettest areas are characterised by hummocks of Bog Moss *Sphagnum* spp. together with Devil's Bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*, Common Yellow Sedge *Carex demissa*, Carnation Sedge *C. panicea*, Mat-grass *Nardus stricta* and Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*. Associated plants include Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, Oblong-leaved Sundew *D. intermedia*, Pale Butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica*, Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*, Bog Ashphodel *Nartheicum ossifragum* and White Beak-sedge *Rhynchospora alba*. The site also supports a rare plant of interest for being well away from its main centre of distribution. Where pools of water collect, Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* and Round-leaved Crowfoot *R. omiophyllus* occur.

Carpets of Bog Mosses have developed elsewhere, supporting many flowering plants, including Lesser Skullcap *Scutellaria minor*, Ivy-leaved Bellflower *Wahlenbergia hederacea*, Marsh St John's Wort *Hypericum elodes*, Marsh Violet *Viola palustris*, and Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*.

Cornish Moneywort *Sibthorpia europaea*, a plant with a restricted distribution in Britain, grows along the banks of the stream which are lined with Alder *Alnus glutinosa* and Willow *Salix* sp.

A diverse invertebrate fauna is present, with at least ten species of Dragonfly recorded. These include Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*, Beautiful Demoiselle *Calypteryx virgo*, Golden-ringed Dragonfly *Cordulegaster boltonii* and the local White-legged Damselfly *Platycnemis pennipes*.

The nationally scarce High Brown Fritillary *Argynnis cydippe* and a nationally rare cuckoo bee, *Nomada tormentillae*, also occur here.