

COUNTY: BEDFORDSHIRE

SITE NAME: MAULDEN WOOD AND PENNYFATHER'S HILL

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

Local Planning Authorities: Mid Bedfordshire District Council
Bedfordshire County Council

National Grid Reference: TL 170390

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 153 **1:10,000:** TL 03 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1970 **Date of Last Revision:**

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

Area: 148.77 ha 367.61 ac

Other information: Site owned by Forestry Commission.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Maulden Wood and Pennyfather's Hill is a large block of mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland situated 10 km south of Bedford.

The site supports an exceptionally rich invertebrate fauna including both county and national rarities and therefore has a distinctive and important contribution to make to invertebrate conservation in Bedfordshire.

Especially important is the ride-associated invertebrate fauna. These species require a continuity of open and sunny wood edge habitat and this is provided by the rides and clearings which develop in woodland with a history of continuous management. Although much of the wood is now plantation it retains a well-developed ride system which is lacking in many other woods in the county.

Other factors which contribute to the importance of this site for invertebrates are the large size of the wood and the range of plant communities which reflect the varied geology and soil conditions.

Maulden Wood is an ancient woodland site situated on a cap of boulder clay. Fragments of semi-natural woodland remain both as discrete blocks within the broad-leaved and coniferous plantation, and along the edges of the rides. These areas retain characteristic plant and invertebrate communities including *Limax cinereoniger*, a mollusc which is particularly associated with ancient woodland sites.

Pennyfather's Hill is situated on the Lower Greensand and relicts of the former heathland habitat exist within plantations of Scot's pine *Pinus sylvestris*. Scot's pine is the foodplant of a micro-moth *Dioryctia mutatella*, a nationally uncommon species which is recorded for this site.

Several invertebrate groups are particularly well represented: the Hymenoptera (Aculeata and Symphyta), Heteroptera and Lepidoptera.

Three nationally rare species of sawfly Symphyta are recorded in the wood, *Caliroa cinxia* and *Pamphilius sylvorum*, both feeders on oak *Quercus* spp., and *Pamphilius gyllenhali*, which feeds on willow *Salix* spp. In addition, there are nationally notable species from several groups including the Symphyta, Coleoptera and Lepidoptera.

The woods also support several plant species which are rare or uncommon in the county including the wild service tree *Sorbus torminalis*, green-flowered helleborine *Epipactis phyllanthes*, hard-shield-fern *Polystichum aculeatum* and associated with the more acidic soils, climbing corydalis *Corydalis claviculata*. The wood has a good breeding bird population and an extensive list of fungi are recorded for the site.

Additional habitat is provided by several ponds.