

County: Devon **Site Name:** Andrews Wood

District: South Hams

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

Local Planning Authority: Devon County Council, South Hams District Council

National Grid Reference: SX 708515 **Area:** 23.5 (ha) 51.8 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 202 **1:10,000:** SX 75 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1952 **Date of Last Revision:** 1976

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

Part of the site is managed as a Nature Reserve by the Devon Trust for Nature Conservation. The site area has been reduced.

Description:

Andrews Wood, a mosaic of species-rich grassland, wet heath and secondary woodland, supports the largest known colony in Britain of a nationally rare plant the Heath lobelia *Lobelia urens*.

The site, which formerly comprised a series of old fields but which has now partly reverted to woodland, supports a variety of different vegetation types developed on soils derived in part from slates and grits of Lower Devonian age and in part from post-glacial gravel and head deposits.

Many of the old fields retain areas of species-rich grassland and have swards characterised by the abundance of Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and also by the occurrence of such herbs as black knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre*, cuckoo flower *Cardamine pratensis*, lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica* and betony *Betonica officinalis*. In some areas the grassland is marshy and is characterised by the occurrence of hemp agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*, fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*, greater bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and bog pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*. In others, wet heath containing heather *Calluna vulgaris* and cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* occurs. Taken together these grasslands support the largest British colony of a nationally-rare plant, the heath lobelia *Lobelia urens*. Elsewhere, Andrews Wood comprises somewhat ill-drained, secondary woodland traversed by numerous hedge-banks and small water courses. The woodland is largely dominated by pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* but contains abundant silver birch *Betula pendula* together with some ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, holly *Ilex aquifolium* and locally beech *Fagus sylvatica*. The shrub layer is dominated by hazel *Corylus avellana* and there is vigorous development of honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* and ivy *Hedera helix*. The ground vegetation is characterised by the abundance of bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, with colonies of opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* on the banks of the small water courses. The old

hedge banks are a feature of the site and are locally characterised by the abundance of bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* and hard fern *Blechnum spicant*.

The mosaic of grassland, heath and woodland supports a rich fauna. The breeding bird community is representative of woods in south-west England, and there are also breeding populations of dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*, common lizard *Lacerta vivipara* and adder *Vipera berus*. The invertebrate fauna is rich and includes such typical butterflies as marbled white *Melanargia galathea*, silver-washed fritillary *Argynnis cydippe* and small pearl-bordered fritillary *A. selene*.