

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER

SITE NAME: BREDON HILL

DISTRICT: WYCHAVON

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL,
Wychavon District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 955405

Area: 377.9 (ha.) 933.4 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 150

1:10,000: SO 93 NE, NW, SO 94 SE, SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1955

Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985

Date of Revised Notification: 24.6.1994

Other Information:

Site boundary alteration (extension and deletion) and alteration to lists of Potentially Damaging Operations. Part of this site is a National Nature Reserve.

Reasons for Notification:

Bredon Hill is an outlier of the Cotswold Hills composed of sedimentary rocks of Jurassic age. The hill top is Inferior Oolitic Limestone, and the lower slopes Upper, Middle and Lower Lias. Throughout the historic period the hill was used for sheep pasture. A feature of the scarp slope is the large number of open-grown trees. These have been incorporated into pasture-woodlands and parklands, first established in 1275.

Bredon Hill has one of the best assemblages of invertebrates associated with ancient trees (known collectively as saproxylic invertebrates) in Britain. Study of invertebrates on the site has been limited compared with more famous sites such as Windsor Great Park and Moccas Park, but available data for the beetle (Coleoptera) fauna, using species that indicate a continuity of mature timber habitat rank the site amongst the most important in Britain. Parts of the hill also retain significant areas of semi-natural calcicolous grassland.

The saproxylic invertebrates are associated with ancient native trees, in particular pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, beech *Fagus sylvatica*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and field maple *Acer campestre*. There are concentrations of such trees in Elmley Castle Deer Park to the east and at Bredon's Norton to the west, but important individual and groups of trees are found all along the northern side of the hill. Nectar sources, such as hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* in hedgerows and scrub, and thistles *Cirsium* spp. in grasslands, are important feeding and mating sites for the adults of saproxylic insects.

Data currently available list 16 invertebrate species that are listed in the British Red Data Book, plus another 87 nationally scarce. At present only beetles have received significant study. The violet click beetle *Limoniscus violaceus*, previously only known from Windsor, has been found at two separate sites on the hill. This species is listed on Annex IIa of the EC Habitats and Species Directive and in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. Its presence, along with two oedemerid beetles, *Ischnomera sanguinicollis* and *I. cyanea*, identifies the site as of international importance. Other nationally rare and endangered species include the beetles *Aeletes atomarius* (Histeridae), *Ampedus rufipennis* and *Prokraerus tibialis* (Elateridae—click beetles), *Prionychus melanarius* (Tenebrionidae—darkling beetles), *Scraptia testacea* (Scraptiidae) and *Stenichnus godarti* (Scydmaenidae). The site is likely to be important for other invertebrate groups such as flies (Diptera), and the nationally endangered saproxylic stiletto fly *Pandivirilia melaleuca* has been recorded.

To the western end of Bredon Hill there are areas of semi-natural calcicolous grassland, characterised by tor-grass *Brachypodium pinnatum*, with other lime-loving grasses including upright brome *Bromus erectus*, crested hair-grass *Koeleria macrantha*, quaking-grass *Briza media* and meadow oat-grass *Avenula pratense*.

Herbs associated with this grassland include salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, dwarf thistle *Cirsium acaule*, wild thyme *Thymus praecox*, dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris*, common rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, pyramidal orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, small scabious *Scabiosa columbaria* and mouse-ear hawkweed *Heracium pilosella*. Locally uncommon plants include purple milk-vetch *Astragalus danicus*, chalk milkwort *Polygala calcarea*, horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, hound's-tongue *Cynoglossum officinale*, bee orchid *Ophrys apifera* and adder's tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*.

Old quarry workings support a number of locally uncommon plants, including fern-grass *Desmazeria rigida*, little mouse-ear *Cerastium semidecandrum*, long-stalked crane's-bill *Geranium columbinum*, rue-leaved saxifrage *Saxifraga tridactylites*, early forget-me-not *Myosotis ramosissima*, twayblade *Listera ovata*, early purple orchid *Orchis mascula* and the locally rare small-flowered buttercup *Ranunculus parviflorus*.

Invertebrates found in these grassland areas include marbled white *Melanargia galathea*, brown argus *Aricia agestis*, dingy skipper *Erynnis tages*, butterflies. Glow-worms *Lampyrus noctiluca* are frequent. *Meloe rugosus*, a nationally rare oil beetle, is also found here. The mollusc fauna of this calcareous grassland is particularly rich, and includes the locally scarce snails *Pomatias elegans* and *Helicella itala*.

Associated with the grasslands are important scrub areas characterised by hawthorn and ivy *Hedera helix*, with elder *Sambucus nigra*, gorse *Ulex europaeus*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, goat willow *Salix caprea* and roses *Rosa* spp. This scrub provides important breeding sites for many species of bird, such as whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, lesser whitethroat *S. curruca*, linnets *Carduelis cannabina*, yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* and turtle dove *Streptopelia turtur*. Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* breed in ancient trees within this scrub.