

Notification Date: 12 March 1990

COUNTY: HEREFORD & WORCESTER SITE NAME: FECKENHAM FOREST

DISTRICT: WYRE FOREST BROMSGROVE SITE REF: 15 WSN

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

Local Planning Authority: HEREFORD & WORCESTER COUNTY COUNCIL, Wyre Forest District Council, Bromsgrove District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 922732, SO 912735, Area: 223.5 (ha.) 552.3 (ac.)
SO 938750

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 139 1:10,000: SO 97 SW, NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1955 Date of Last Revision: 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984* Date of Last Revision: 1990

Other Information:

Site boundary alteration (extensions & deletion). Site includes the previously notified site known as Randan Woods. The site has been extended to include part of Chaddesley Wood National Nature Reserve and Pepper Wood, a site which has not been notified previously. Part managed by the Worcestershire Trust for Nature Conservation. Part managed by the Woodland Trust. Part of the site (Chaddesley Woods and Randan Woods) is listed in 'A Nature Conservation Review' edited by D A Ratcliffe, Cambridge University Press 1977.

*part of site – as Randan Woods

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Feckenham Forest is situated between Bromsgrove and Kidderminster in north-east Worcestershire and contains the largest remnants of the Royal Hunting Forest of Feckenham which covered this part of Worcestershire in the Middle Ages. The site is considered nationally important as an example of oak-dominated ancient woodland over predominantly acidic soils in which both native oak species are present. In addition the site includes a number of small unimproved meadows. The site has a diverse breeding bird community and is also of importance for invertebrates.

The woods lie on poorly drained, acidic loamy clay soils developed from the Keuper Marl. The higher ground is capped by glacial drift composed of freely draining sands and gravels on which light, strongly acidic soils have developed. In general sessile oak *Quercus petraea* is the dominant species on the strongly acidic soils and pedunculate oak *Q. robur* on the loamy clays although the two species also occur together in mixed oak stands.

Where sessile oak is dominant, it is associated with downy birch *Betula pubescens* and rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*. The shrub layer is generally sparse with hazel *Corylus avellana* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* being the main understorey species. The ground flora is dominated by bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* together with species tolerant of strongly acidic conditions such as bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, common cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense* and bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*.

Downy birch and rowan are also the main associated species where pedunculate oak is dominant. In these areas the shrub layer is denser and is more diverse. The main understorey species is again hazel but also includes other species such as holly *Ilex aquifolium*, midland hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata* and wild privet *Ligustrum vulgare*. The ground flora is also richer, being dominated by bramble *Rubus fruticosus* together with

typical woodland species such as yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*, bugle *Ajuga reptans* and wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*.

Alder *Alnus glutinosa* is the dominant tree along streams and in damper depressions. The ground flora in these areas contains a number of species not found elsewhere on the site such as opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* and thin-spiked wood-sedge *Carex strigosa*. Several less common tree and shrub species are present in small numbers. In Coalpit Coppice hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* occurs along the stream. A few trees of the nationally restricted large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos* are present in Pepper Wood. Trees of small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* and wild service-tree *Sorbus torminalis* are scattered throughout the site. A number of uncommon herb species also occur such as violet helleborine *Epipactus purpurata*, heath cudweed *Gnaphalium sylvaticum*, herb-Paris *Paris quadrifolia* and lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis*.

The small unimproved meadows in the site support a crested dog's-tail – common knapweed *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* type of plant community. Several grass species occur with no single species dominant. Grasses include crested dog's-tail, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and common bent *Agrostis capillaris*. These meadows have a rich herb flora including many typical meadow species such as common knapweed, pepper-saxifrage *Silaum silaus* and meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris*. The meadows also include a number of species which are local in Worcestershire such as dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*.

The site is also of importance for invertebrates. Many uncommon species occur from a variety of groups. The nationally rare terrestrial caddis-fly *Enoicyla pusilla* occurs throughout the site and two nationally rare crane-flies *Nephrotoma lunulicornis* and *N. aculeata* have also been recorded. Several nationally restricted moths occur which are associated with the woodland flora. Species include the great oak beauty *Boarmia roboraria*, the larvae of which feed on oak and beautiful snout *Hypena crassalis*, the larvae of which feed on bilberry. The site is also of interest for beetles with several scarce woodland species occurring including *Apoderus coryli* and *Bytiscus populi*.

The site supports a diverse breeding bird community. This includes species that are resident all year round such as woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*, tawny owl *Strix aluco* and lesser spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor* as well as summer visitors such as redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, grasshopper warbler *Locustella naevia* and tree pipit *Anthus trivialis*.