

**COUNTY:** LEICESTERSHIRE **SITE NAME:** ULVERSCROFT VALLEY

**DISTRICT:** CHARNWOOD

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Charnwood Borough Council

**National Grid Reference:** SK 500 126

**Area:** 105.7 (ha.) 261.1 (ac.)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 129

**1:10,000:** SK 41 SE, SK 51 SW

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** 1956

**Date of Last Revision:** 1981

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1984

**Date of Last Revision:** –

**Other Information:**

The site boundary has been altered. Parts of the site are owned or managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation and the National Trust as a nature reserve.

**Reasons for Notification:**

The site supports a series of semi-natural habitats representative of those formerly more widespread on the siliceous clay soils of Charnwood Forest. These include permanent grassland, heath, woodland and wetlands. While each habitat is important on its own, the combination produces one of the best wildlife Sites in Leicestershire. The wet grasslands have no equivalent in the County. Over 200 plant species have been recorded, some rare in Leicestershire, and there are mammals, insects and birds of note.

**Biology:**

Unimproved neutral grassland adjacent to Sandhills Lodge, Lea Wood and Poultney wood varies in wetness and species composition. Drier areas are dominated by sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and fescues *Festuca* spp. Diversity is provided by a ridge and furrow system with the wet areas Supporting fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea* and flea sedge *Carex pulicaris*, both rare in the County.

Some of the best areas of unimproved acidic grassland in the County are found adjacent to Lea wood and south of Ulverscroft Priory. A very rich flora is associated with the wet areas, with 13 recorded sedge species including bottle sedge *Carex rostrata*, rare in the County. Heath

spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* ssp *ericetorum*, marsh violet *Viola palustris* and marsh arrow grass *Triglochin palustris* are amongst other notable species. Adder's-tongue fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum* and quaking-grass *Briza media* are found in drier areas. Acidic marshy grassland in the north-east of the site is dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*, sedges and rushes. Heather *Calluna vulgaris* and meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* are found. Nearby dry heath/acid grassland mosaic supports Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*.

The woodlands on the site contain one of the County's remaining unspoilt sessile oak woods with a great diversity in tree, shrub and ground flora and an associated diversity of fauna. A scrub area with gorse *Ulex europaeus*, western gorse *Ulex galli* and willow *Salix cinerea* supports a diverse moth fauna. Snipe and woodcock breed regularly, yellow wagtail does so from time to time, and redstart has been known in the woodland.