

COUNTY: Devon

SITE NAME: Bradiford Valley

DISTRICT: North Devon

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

Local Planning Authority: Devon County Council, North Devon District Council

National Grid Reference: SS 557350

Area: 23.2 (ha) 57.3 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 180

1:10,000: SS 53 NE, SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1974

Date of Last Revision: 1976

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986

Date of Last Revision:

Other Information:

Boundary amended by extension and deletion.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Bradiford Valley is important for its ancient sessile oak woodland and associated breeding birds. Additional habitats are provided by an old mill leat, pond, stream, and several meadows. The whole supports a diverse wildlife in close proximity to the town of Barnstaple.

The stream, Bradiford Water, runs in a south-westerly direction, at about 15 m above sea level, entering the Taw estuary nearly 2 km beyond the site. Tutshill Wood rises to about 95 m, and faces south-east over the generally level flood plain situated between the leat and stream. Devonian siltstones and mudstones underlie the site, giving rise to the typical brown earth soils.

The wood consists largely of a stand of Sessile Oak *Quercus petraea* with Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* as a codominant. Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium* and occasional Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* occur in the understorey, with some Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*. The ground flora includes Primrose *Primula vulgaris*, Wood Avens *Geum urbanum*, Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*. Some areas of the wood have been invaded by Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and Beech *Fagus sylvatica*. Here Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and Ivy *Hedera helix* are abundant, with frequent Great Woodrush *Luzula sylvatica* and Wood Sage *Teucrium scorodonia*. Alder *Alnus glutinosa* occurs as individual trees along the watercourses, and as a stand with Sallow *Salix cinerea* where a tributary stream enters the site to the north.

The hillside and flood-plain fields are pasture grasslands with characteristic species such as Bents *Agrostis spp*, Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne* and Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, Clovers *Trifolium spp* and Buttercups *Ranunculus spp* and Rushes *Juncus spp* in wetter areas. Some herbs occur generally, such as Cat's-ear *Hypochoeris radicata* and Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, while others such as Common Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica* and Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense* are more local. These grasslands are a source of invertebrates on which many of the site's breeding birds feed.

The site supports over 50 breeding bird species. Many of these occur in the wood, eg Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, all three British species of Woodpecker, Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*, Little Owl *Athene noctua*, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* and Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*. Several Warblers such as Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* and Garden Warbler *S. borin* also breed here. Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*,

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* and Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*
nest near the watercourses.