

COUNTY: Devon

SITE NAME: CHUDLEIGH KNIGHTON HEATH

DISTRICT: Teignbridge

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

Local Planning Authority: Devon County Council, Teignbridge District Council

National Grid Reference: SX 838776 Area: 50.7 (ha) 125.3 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 191 1:10,000: SX 87 NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1974 Date of Last Revision: 1976

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

Other Information:

The site is managed as a nature reserve by the Devon Trust for Nature Conservation. The site boundary has been amended by deletion.

Description:

Chudleigh Knighton Heath is a fine example of lowland Devon heathland and is an important representative of damp heathlands of South West Britain.

The site supports a varied flora which includes both rare and local species and is notable for its breeding populations of birds, amphibians and insects.

The site lies at an altitude of between 125 and 175 metres on the eastern side of the Bovey basin. The soils, which demonstrate a range of acidity, have developed from drift deposits superimposed on clays of Jurassic and Cretaceous age. The greater part of the site comprises open heathland characterised by an abundance of Western Gorse *Ulex gallii*, European Gorse *U. europaeus*, Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, Bell Heather *Erica cinerea*, Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and Bristle Bent *Agrostis curtisii*. Plants such as Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and Common Milkwort *Polygala vulgaris* characterise the drier areas of the heath and while wetter areas in the south west of the site support Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*, Bog Mosses *Sphagnum* spp and Southern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and Marsh St John's-wort *Hypericum elodes*. Two species of plants which have a very restricted distribution in Devon and which occur on the site are Petty Whin *Genista anglica* and Pale Dog-violet *Viola lactea*.

The roadside verges and other areas at the periphery of the heath support a flora characteristic of somewhat calcareous and disturbed soils. This includes species which are rare or uncommon in Devon, such as Fragrant Orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*, Blue Fleabane *Erigeron acer*, Small Toadflax *Chaenorhinum minus* and Pale Flax *Linum bienne*.

The site is fringed in part by woodland dominated by Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* and Hazel *Corylus avellana*, and by scrub, dominated by Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and Willow *Salix* spp. The variety of habitats present supports a diverse breeding bird community which includes Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* and Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*. Red-backed Shrike *Lanius colluria* and Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* have also been recorded.

There is a rich Lepidoptera fauna which includes the Green Hairstreak *Collyphrys rubi* butterfly, and a number of Moth species rare in Devon including *Phoceuusa paupella*, *Stenoptilla zopholactylus* and *Monopsis weaverella*.

Small pools on the heath provide the breeding grounds for a range of amphibia including the uncommon Warty Newt *Triturus cristatus*.