

County: Dorset **Site Name:** Eggardon Hill & Lucas Farm

District: West Dorset

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

Local Planning Authority: West Dorset District Council, Dorset County Council

National Grid Reference: SY 542950 **Area:** 144.1 (ha) 356.0 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 194 **1:10,000:** SY 59 SW, NW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1952 **Date of Last Revision:** 1977

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 **Date of Last Revision:** –

Other Information:

Part owned by National Trust. Boundary has been amended by extension and deletion.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

The site comprises part of the west face of the chalk escarpment and an area of landslips of chalk, greensand and gault clay above fuller's earth. This varied geology is reflected in a range of habitats including rich chalk, neutral and acid grassland communities, flushes and woodland.

Some parts of the chalk slopes carry a sward dominated by the taller grasses, particularly red fescue *Festuca rubra*, upright brome *Bromus erectus* and locally, tall oat grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*. Other areas, dominated by sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* and glaucous sedge *Carex flacca* are rich in herbs. Here, squinancywort *Asperula cynanchica*, common spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, betony *Stachys officinalis*, devil's-bit *Succisa pratensis* and rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus* are often abundant. Slopes with a northerly aspect hold swards with fewer grasses and herbs but are rich in mosses, especially *Pseudoscleropodium purum* and *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*.

The landslips have a complex mixture of plant communities resulting from variability in the underlying rock. In close association with chalk swards, damp near neutral soils support communities dominated by bent grasses *Agrostis* spp. with crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, quaking-grass *Briza media* and abundant devil's-bit, betony, lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica* and bitter vetch *Lathyrus montanus*.

Flushes are dominated by soft rush and hard rush *Juncus effusus* and *J. inflexus*, yellow flag *Iris pseudacorus* and giant horsetail *Equisetum telmateia* with water mint *Mentha aquatica*, greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and southern marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*.

Woodland on the drier areas is dominated by ash *Fraxinus excelsior* with pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* locally dominant and frequent field maple *Acer campestre*. The shrub layer mainly consists of hazel *Corylus avellana* with guelder rose *Viburnum opulus* abundant in the damper areas. Dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*. Ramsons *Allium ursinum* and wood false brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum* provide the dominant ground cover. Wetter woodland, especially that fringing the stream is dominated by alder *Alnus glutinosa*, frequently with dense stands of pendulous sedge *Carex pendula*. The

woodland interest of this site is extended by the many hedgelines which contain mature trees and shrubs.

The fauna is not well studied but as a result of the diversity of habitats, it may be expected to be varied. The butterflies of the downland include the very local Adonis blue *Lysandra bellargus* and some uncommon and local dipteran flies have been recorded.