

COUNTY: KENT            SITE NAME: EAST BLEAN WOODS

DISTRICT: CANTERBURY

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

Local Planning Authority: CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TR 189640      Area: 156.8 (ha.) 387.3 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 179      1:10,000: TR 16 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1981      Date of Last Revision: –

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

Other Information:

This site includes a Kent Trust for Nature Conservation reserve.

Reasons for Notification:

East Blean Wood is one of the best remaining examples of primary deciduous woodland in the Blean Woods complex north of Canterbury. The wood comprises mixed coppice with oak standards, sweet chestnut coppice and also a small plantation of Scots pine. The diverse ground flora includes some species indicative of a long history of woodland cover. The smaller, outlying Childs Forstal, Buckwell and Clangate Woods are similar. Also of interest is the insect fauna, particularly the moths and butterflies. The rare heath fritillary butterfly *Mellicta athalia*, a species specially protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, occurs in these woods.

Hornbeam, hazel and ash are the main coppiced species, but a wide variety of other trees and shrubs also occur including the uncommon midland hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata* and wild service tree *Sorbus torminalis*. Oak is the predominant standard tree with some ash, sycamore and cherry also present as standards. Old oak and hornbeam pollards can be found along the old boundary banks within the woods.

The woodland ground flora is varied and rich in species. Bramble and bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* are usually the most common plants but wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, yellow archangel *Lamium galeobdolon* and dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* are also plentiful. Less common plants include spurge laurel *Daphne laureola* and butcher's broom *Ruscus aculeatus*. In the more calcareous parts of the wood herb paris *Paris quadrifolia*, bird's nest orchid *Neottia nidus-avis* and the greater butterfly orchid *Platanthera chlorantha* are found.

A number of small streams, flushes and ponds are present in the woods. These damper areas have a distinctive flora, often dominated by pendulous sedge *Carex*

*pendula*. Other plants such as cuckoo flower *Cardamine pratensis*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris* and common spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* are also common.

Common cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense* occurs in the more recently coppiced areas. This species is important as the food plant for the caterpillars of the rare heath fritillary which is now found only in the Blean Woods complex and a few sites in Devon and Cornwall.

The woods are also of interest for birds. A wide range of woodland species breed including nuthatch, nightingale, hawfinch, three species of woodpecker, and several tits and warblers.