

County: BERKSHIRE/SURREY

Site name : BROADMOOR TO BAGSHOT WOODS
AND HEATHS

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

Local Planning Authorities: Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Surrey County Council,
Surrey Heath District Council

National Grid Reference: SU877644

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 175 **1:10,000:** SU86 SE, SW, NW, SU96 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1973 **Date of Last Revision:** 1975

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1983, 1985 **Date of Last Revision:** 20 October 2000

Area: 1696.99 ha

Reasons for Notification

This site has an extensive mosaic of broadleaved woodland, coniferous plantation, dry and wet heathland, valley mire, a series of base-poor ponds and a scarce breeding invertebrate assemblage. In particular, the heathland and coniferous plantation supports internationally important populations of woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler, and have a nationally important dragonfly and damselfly population. The site includes the valley bogs of Broadmoor Bottom and Wishmoor Bottom which form the most important remaining examples of this type of habitat in the area.

General Description

The mosaic of habitats mostly overlies sandy Barton Bed deposits and plateau gravels of the Thames Basin series. Wetter areas are underlain by sands and clays of the Bracklesham Beds and alluvium.

The valley bog at Broadmoor Bottom supports wet heath dominated by cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and the bog moss *Sphagnum compactum* with areas of bog myrtle *Myrica gale*. Wetter areas contain typical bog plants including bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, round-leaved sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, and deer grass *Trichophorum cespitosum*, whilst purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* dominates much of the remainder. The valley bog at Wishmoor Bottom supports a rich bryophyte flora with nine species of *Sphagnum* bog moss including the nationally scarce *Sphagnum flexuosum*, and *S. magellanicum* which is scarce in southern England. Hare's-tail cotton grass *Eriophorum vaginatum*, which is uncommon in south-east England, is also present in wetter areas around Wishmoor Bottom, together with two important fern species, the nationally rare crested buckler-fern *Dryopteris cristata* and the nationally scarce marsh fern *Thelypteris palustris*.

The drier heathland is mainly dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris* and dwarf gorse *Ulex minor*, with areas of bracken and pine and birch scrub. An area of grass heath dominated by bristle bent *Agrostis curtisii* and dwarf gorse occurs to the east of Wishmoor Bottom at one of the most easterly limits of the community. Common wintergreen *Pyrola minor*, which has a very local distribution in Berkshire, is present in the grass heath.

The invertebrate fauna of the wetland areas includes the bog bush-cricket *Metrioptera brachyptera* and a range of dragonflies. These include the broad-bodied chaser *Libellula depressa*, black-tailed skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum*, large red damselfly *Pyrrosoma nymphula* and the golden-ringed dragonfly *Cordulegaster boltonii* which is local in southern England. The dry heathland areas support the nationally scarce silver-studded blue butterfly *Plebejus argus*, and the uncommon spider *Euarcha arcuata*.

The mixture of open heathland and woodland provides habitat for heathland birds including stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* and three particularly vulnerable species of bird, woodlark *Lullula arborea*, nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*. The site also has a small breeding population of hobby *Falco subbuteo*. Forestry management of the coniferous woodland, which includes rotational clearance and subsequent replanting, provides temporary areas of developing heathland. These areas, together with open storm damaged areas and the developing heathland alongside broad forest rides, are utilised as breeding habitat by woodlark and nightjar.

Rapley Lakes are a collection of large, base-poor ponds. They support a rich diversity of aquatic and marginal plants including alternate water milfoil *Myriophyllum alterniflorum*, bog St John's wort *Hypericum elodes* and lesser bulrush *Typha angustifolium*. Of particular importance is the dragonfly fauna with several rare species present including the brilliant emerald *Somatochlora metallica*, ruddy darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*, downy emerald *Cordulia aenea* and small red damselfly *Ceriagrion tenellum*.

Other Information

1. This site includes land which has been proposed for the designation as a Special Protection Area under the Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds. Nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler are listed on Annex I of the Directive.
2. Woodlark, Dartford warbler and hobby are specially protected by being listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
3. Woodlark and nightjar are priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
4. Lowland heathland is a priority habitat in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.