

County: Devon **Site Name:** Halstock Wood

District: West 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, Dartmoor National Park Authority

National Grid Reference: SX 607936 **Area:** 10.3 (ha) 25.5 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 191 **1:10,000:** SX 69 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1952 **Date of Last Revision:** 1976

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

Other Information:

Within Dartmoor National Park.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

Halstock Wood, on the northern edge of Dartmoor, is an example of an upland sessile oakwood, supporting a wide range of plants and birds.

This ancient semi-natural woodland lies on east-facing slopes above the East Okement River, at an altitude of 250–300 m. The steep-sided valley bears thin, well-drained soils overlying a variety of rock types – predominantly chert, slate and tuff of Lower Carboniferous age.

The dominant tree species is sessile oak *Quercus petraea*, largely of stored coppice origin, with ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* interspersed throughout, and alder *Alnus glutinosa* on the river banks. Hazel *Corylus avellana* dominates the understorey, with occasional holly *Ilex aquifolium* and guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus*. The woodland floor shows a diverse ground flora including bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, pignut *Conopodium majus*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, common cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense* and ramsons *Allium ursinum* and with bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* in more acidic parts. Occasional wet flushes occur on the lower slopes, and these are characterised by meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*. At least 79 species of lichen occur in the wood, with a particularly well-developed *Parmelietum laevigatae* community on the trees: the species *Graphina ruiziana*, found on smooth-barked trees near the river, is a local species on Dartmoor.

Some 30 species of bird breed in the wood, including raven *Corvus corax*, buzzard *Buteo buteo*, redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* and wood warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*. The woods along the East Okement, of which Halstock Wood forms a large part, are of particular interest as the site has one of the largest colonies of pied flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* in South West England.