

COUNTY: Devon

SITE NAME: BOVEY VALLEY

DISTRICT: Teignbridge

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Most of the site is declared as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) under Section 19 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Local Planning Authority: Devon County Council, Teignbridge District Council, Dartmoor National Park Authority

National Grid Reference: SX 770810 Area: 261.5 (ha) 646.1 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 191 1:10,000: SX 77 NE, SX 78 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1963 Date of Last Revision: 1976

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

Other Information:

The site boundary has been amended by extension and deletion. The site includes most of the Bovey Valley NNR (excluding Higher Knowle Wood). It is wholly within the Dartmoor National Park and the Devon County Structure Plan Dartmoor Conservation Zone. It is part of the Nature Conservation Site which also includes Yarner Wood NNR.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site comprises a large area of semi-natural broadleaved woodland composed of various stand types, and Lustleigh Cleave which adds a variety of habitats. The lichen flora is of national importance and the bryophyte flora of regional importance.

The site lies between 100–300 m in altitude, within the valley of the River Bovey which flows in a south-easterly direction at this point. Part of the site extends up the Becka Brook valley to beyond the Becka Falls.

Much of the site lies over granite on loamy, acid brown earth soils with many granite boulders at the surface. Some of the woodland grows on similar soils derived from Carboniferous slates. In the river valley bottoms, gleyed, humic soils with various textures have developed in alluvium derived from the granite and the slates.

Much of the woodland is comparatively recent in origin. The wide range of relief, aspect, soil conditions and management history has resulted in different types of woodland developing. Generally a mixture of Sessile Oak *Quercus petraea*, Pedunculate Oak *Q. robur* and Silver Birch *Betula pendula* has colonised well drained ground, whilst Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Aspen *Populus tremula* and Sallow *Salix sp* grow with Pedunculate Oak and Birch on wetter ground. These stand types have developed as a result of a cessation in management of old field systems and common ground. Other areas have Pedunculate Oak/Ash stands with a Hazel *Corylus avellana* understory; these are probably remnants of a coppice-with-standards system. There are also areas of neglected Oak coppice which now have a Holly *Ilex aquifolium* and Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* understory. Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* is locally dominant in places and invasive in others.

The ground flora varies from a dense cover of Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* with a few calcifuge herbs such as Cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense* and Wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* to a herb rich flora including Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, Primrose *Primula vulgaris* and Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*. There is an area of marshy grassland dominated by Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* but including Bog

Myrtle *Myrica gale*, Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis*, Alder Buckthorn *Frangula alnus*, Lemon-scented Fern *Thelypteris oreopteris* and Bog Mosses *Sphagnum spp.*

Older trees and the boulders especially those nearer to the two rivers are exceptionally rich in lichens and bryophytes. There are many rare and notable lichens including: *Lobaria amplissima*, *L. laetivirens*, *L. pulmonaria*, *Carillaria pulverea*, *Nephroma parile*, *Lecanora piniperda* and *Thrombium epigaeum* (growing on soil). Bryophytes include *Trichocolea tomentella* and *Hookeria lucens*. The Tunrbridge Filmy-fern *Hymenophyllum tunbrigense* grows on streamside boulders.

Lustleigh Cleave occupies the south-west facing side of the Bovey Valley. It supports a mixture of Birch and Oak woodland and older Oak woodland on granite clitter, together with large areas of Bracken with scattered trees and Gorse *Ulex europaeus*. Part of the Cleave is an acid grassland/dry heath mosaic and there are several acidic flushes. The most notable plants are Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria* and Adders-tongue Fern *ophioglossum vulgatum*. The granite boulders support a rich saxicolous lichen flora including *Cetraria hepatizon* and *Massalongia carnosa*.

The breeding bird community is typical of western woodland, with Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus minor*, Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* and Heron *Ardea cinerea*.

Dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius* are common and the butterflies include scarce species like the Purple Emperor *Apatura iris* and Brown Hairstreak *Thecla betulae*.