

File ref:

**County:** Hampshire      **Site Name:** Crab Wood SSSI

**Local Planning Authority:** Hampshire County Council, Winchester City Council

**National Grid Reference:** SU 431295

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 185      **1:25,000:** SU 42

**Area:** 71.05 (ha) 175.56 (ac)

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** 1951      **Date of Last Revision:** 1979

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

**Other Information:**

Owned by Hampshire County Council. The SSSI includes Crab Wood Local Nature Reserve (36ha), managed by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Naturalists' Trust under an agreement with Hampshire County Council.

**Reasons for Notification:**

Crab Wood lies on the Hampshire Upper Chalk plateau and is on relatively shallow clay-with-flints. It is dominated by oak *Quercus robur* standards over a hazel *Corylus avellana* shrub layer last coppiced approximately 20 years ago. The hazel stools are large and the coppice now 4-6m high with the largest stems about 15cm in diameter. The oldest generation of oaks has largely been creamed from the canopy within the past two decades, possibly at the time of the last coppicing, and the dominant oak generation is around 100 years old. There are occasional large-crowned beech *Fagus sylvatica* and recent intrusions of ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and birch *Betula* spp. and some oak regeneration, mainly in small clearings beneath the canopy.

The woodland ground flora is a fine example of a former coppice on clay-with-flint and is widely dominated by either bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* or dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*. About 18 other species are common, most tending to be characteristic of acid or neutral oakwood soils, and the flora includes widespread Solomon's-seal *Polygonatum multiflorum*. There is a small area of lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis*. The Lepidoptera fauna is known to be rich and includes several locally distributed butterfly species including the purple emperor *Apatura iris*.

The wood is thought to be of considerable antiquity: the site was wooded during the 18th century and from documentary evidence, it was probably so at least two centuries before. The western half of the wood is thought to have formerly been wood-pasture, whilst the eastern half (the Local Nature Reserve) appears to have a longer history of coppice management. These historical differences are reflected in differences in the distribution, and to some extent age, species and limb structure of the trees and shrubs, in addition to which the former wood pasture appears to support a somewhat poorer flora than the former coppice.