

Site Notified to the Secretary of State: 24 June 1988

COUNTY: Devon

SITE NAME: COOMBE MEADOW

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, West Devon Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SS 498022

Area: 5.1 (ha) 12.6 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 191

1:10,000: SS 40 SE, 50 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1988

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

A New Site, adjacent to Ribsons Meadows SSSI.

#### **Description and Reasons for Notification:**

This site is important for its herb-rich grassland communities. In addition, the scrub and woodland support a high number of birds and insects.

The meadow is generally level and, being situated on the clayey soils derived from the underlying Carboniferous shales, drains relatively slowly with some seasonal water-logging.

Purple Moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* dominates the sward, with other grasses including Heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*, Sweet Vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Velvet Bent *Agrostis canina*. These are accompanied by abundant Meadow Thistle *Cirsium dissectum* and Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus* together with other herbs such as Bitter Vetch *Lathyrus montanus*, Saw-wort *Serratula pratensis*, Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* and, more rarely, Lesser Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera bifolia*. Fleabane *Pulicaris dysenterica* and Meadow-sweet *Filipendula ulmaria* occur in places, with Hemp Agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*, Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* and Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*.

A minor heathy component is represented by Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* together with Creeping Willow *Salix repens*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and Mat-grass *Nardus stricta*. Sedges are frequent and amongst those occurring are, Flea Sedge *C. pulicaris*, Tawny Sedge *C. hostiana* and Glaucous Sedge *C. flacca*.

There is a strip of well-established woodland around the site. Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Hazel *Corylus avellana* are the main components with Willow *Salix sp* and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* forming occasional thickets. Alder Buckthorn *Frangula alnus* and Guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus* also occur. The ground flora supports a good variety of herbs such as Tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum*, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, Wild Strawberry *Fragaria vesca*, Yellow Pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum* and Wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*.

A rich fauna lives on the site. Over twenty species of butterflies have been recorded, the more nationally scarce of which are Wood White *Leptidea sinapsis*, Marsh Fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia*, Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia* and Purple Hair-streak *Quercusia quercus*. A high number of birds breed with typical woodland species occurring such as Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa*

*stricta*, Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* and Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major*. Resident mammals include the Dormouse.