

File ref:

**County:** Devon    **Site Name:** Dunsland Park

**District:** Torridge

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

**Local Planning Authority:** Torridge District Council, Devon County Council

**National Grid Reference:** SS 409051      **Area:** 26.82 (ha) 66.27 (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 190      **1:10,000:** SS 40 NW, 40 SW

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

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1991    **Date of Last Revision:** –

**Other Information:**

Owned by the National Trust.  
New site.

**Description and Reasons for Notification:**

Dunsland Park is important for its very rich lichen flora, containing many nationally rare species, and for the presence of some rare invertebrates.

The site lies in north Devon five miles east of Holsworthy. It varies in altitude from 100–160 m AOD, and consists of a shallow north-south valley overlying Carboniferous shale and sandstone. It contains both parkland on the slopes with scattered ancient oak *Quercus* spp., ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, lime *Tilia* spp. and beech *Fagus sylvatica* trees, and willow *Salix* spp., and alder *Alnus glutinosa* carr surrounding old fish-ponds on the valley floor. Several flushed areas are also present on the slopes, with well developed tall herb communities dominated by meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* with wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, hemlock water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* and reed canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*.

The undisturbed nature of the site and the high humidity in the carr have allowed the development of exceptionally diverse lichen communities. 163 species of lichen have been recorded in total, including over 40 highly indicative of long-term woodland continuity, an exceptionally high number.

The Lobarion community is very well developed, with all four British species of lungwort *Lobaria* spp. present, including the rare *L. amplissima*. Many specimens of *L. pulmonaria* and *Sticta fuliginosa* are fertile, the latter very unusually so, indicating the excellent conditions for lichens at this site. The Lobarion community also contains the national rarities *Heterodermia obscurata*, *Parmelia arnoldii* and *P. sinuosa*. The older trees in the parkland support the *Lecanactideum premneae* community, an assemblage of species which occurs when the trees are too old to support the Lobarion. Rarities in this community include *Arthonia zwackii*, *Leptorhaphis ischnobela* and *Cyphelium inquinans*.

Dunsland also possesses considerable invertebrate interest. Of greatest interest is a small area of coppice woodland which has two Red Data Book species: a fungus gnat *Rymosia britteni* and a crane fly *Paradelphomyia fuscata*, as well as a snail *Zenobiella subrufescens* which is found only in ancient woodland. Dead wood invertebrates include: a woodland soldier fly *Xylophagus ater*, a beetle *Cerylon ferrugineum* and a bristly millipede *Polyxenus lagurus*. The carr supports a rich assemblage of wetland flies including *Palloptera scutellata*, which is nationally scarce, *Sepedon spinipes*, *Tetanocera hyalipennis*, *Trigometopus frontalis* and the nationally scarce slender ground hopper *Tetrix subulata*.

