

EC Directive 92/43 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name: Aston Rowant
Unitary Authority/County: Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire
SAC status: Designated on 1 April 2005
Grid reference: SU727972
SAC EU code: UK0030082
Area (ha): 127.75
Component SSSI: Aston Rowant SSSI

Site description:

Aston Rowant is one of the largest surviving complexes of beech *Fagus sylvatica* woodland, mixed scrub, juniper and chalk grassland in the Chilterns. The woodland is dominated by beech, together with pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, wild cherry *Prunus avium*, common whitebeam *Sorbus aria*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and holly *Ilex aquifolium*, particularly on the deeper soils of the plateau. The ground flora includes sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, sweet woodruff *Galium odoratum*, wood dog-violet *Viola riviniana*, yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. in the open areas. The woods also contain a number of uncommon plants characteristic of the Chilterns beechwoods including violet helleborine *Epipactis purpurata*, white helleborine *Cephalanthera damasonium* and wood barley *Hordelymus europaeus*.

In the dry coombes there are stands of open scrub dominated by juniper *Juniperus communis*, intermixed with grassland. Mixed scrub of elder *Sambucus nigra*, privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, wayfaring-tree *Viburnum lantana*, buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica*, yew *Taxus baccata*, whitebeam, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* and bramble is present on Beacon Hill and on the margins of the juniper scrub. The scrub also contains heavily rabbit-grazed areas with bare ground colonised by wild candytuft *Iberis amara*, a species with a British distribution centred on the Chilterns.

Qualifying habitats: The site is designated under **article 4(4)** of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:

- *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests. (Beech forests on neutral to rich soils)
- *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands. (Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands)

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for Great Britain.

Register reference number: UK0030082

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs