

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

## Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

**Name:** Rook Clift  
**Unitary Authority/County:** West Sussex  
**SAC status:** Designated on 1 April 2005  
**Grid reference:** SU820182  
**SAC EU code:** UK0030058  
**Area (ha):** 10.82  
**Component SSSI:** Rook Clift SSSI

### Site description:

Rook Clift is a small wooded combe on the scarp slope of the South Downs. The soils are predominantly calcareous in nature, overlying the chalk of the Downs. Deeper soils occur at the foot of the slope, and also the course of a stream, arising within the wood.

This site is an ancient woodland which remains in a semi-natural condition. Large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos* dominates the canopy, together with some ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and beech *Fagus sylvatica*. It lies on the deeper soils towards the base of the slope and valley bottom of the small wooded combe, which gives the site its humid microclimate. The soils are rather deeper and there is less exposed rock at this site because the chalk is more readily weathered than the limestones on which many of the other sites lie. Despite this, the vegetation is otherwise typical of the habitat type, with an abundance of ferns such as hart's-tongue *Phyllitis scolopendrium* and shield-fern *Polystichum* spp. In addition to species more common in the west of Britain, continental species such as Italian lords-and-ladies *Arum italicum* also occur.

**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:

- *Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines. (Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes)\*

Annex I priority habitats are denoted by an asterisk (\*).

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

Register reference number: UK0030058

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

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