

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

## Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

<b>Name:</b>	Mendip Limestone Grasslands
<b>Unitary Authority/County:</b>	North Somerset, Somerset
<b>SAC status:</b>	Designated on 1 April 2005
<b>Grid reference:</b>	ST401557
<b>SAC EU code:</b>	UK0030203
<b>Area (ha):</b>	417.47
<b>Component SSSI:</b>	Brean Down SSSI, Crook Peak to Shute Shelve Hill SSSI, Uphill Cliff SSSI

### Site description:

This site comprises coastal and inland sections of the Carboniferous Limestone outcrops of the Mendips. It contains a wide range of habitats including ancient and secondary semi-natural broadleaved woodland, unimproved calcareous grassland and a complex mosaic of calcareous grassland and acidic dry dwarf-shrub heath.

The coastal headland and inland hills support the largest area of sheep's-fescue – carline-thistle (*Festuca ovina* – *Carlina vulgaris*) grassland in England, including two sub-types (the dwarf sedge *Carex humilis* and honewort *Trinia glauca* sub-communities) known from no other site in the UK. Areas of short-turf sheep's-fescue – meadow oat-grass *Helictotrichon pratense* grassland also occur inland. The site is exceptional in that it supports a number of rare and scarce vascular plants typical of the oceanic southern temperate and Mediterranean elements of the British flora. These include white rock-rose *Helianthemum apenninum*, Somerset hair-grass *Koeleria vallesiana* and honewort. Transitions to limestone heath situated on flatter terrain also occur. Heath species such as heather *Calluna vulgaris*, bell heather *Erica cinerea* and western gorse *Ulex gallii* are well represented and bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* is often locally dominant.

Rose Wood and King's Wood (in Crook Peak to Shute Shelve Hill SSSI) are ancient woodlands. Canopy species include ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* and common whitebeam *Sorbus aria* agg. The understorey is dominated by hazel *Corylus avellana* with some field maple *Acer campestre* and spindle *Euonymus europaeus*. Ground flora species include dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, columbine *Aquilegia vulgaris* and meadow saffron *Colchicum autumnale*. The nationally rare purple gromwell *Lithospermum purpurocaeruleum* occurs at Rose Wood.

**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)\*
- Caves not open to the public
- European dry heaths
- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*). (Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone)

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

- Greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*

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: UK0030203

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trew Salmon*

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