

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

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name:	Woolmer Forest
Unitary Authority/County:	Hampshire
SAC status:	Designated on 1 April 2005
Grid reference:	SU805325
SAC EU code:	UK0030304
Area (ha):	666.68
Component SSSI:	Woolmer Forest SSSI

Site description:

Woolmer Forest is located at the western end of the Weald. The majority lies on the coarse sands of the Folkestone beds. The drainage ditches and streams crossing the site have cut broad valleys into the sandy soils, interspersed with rounded hills and ridges.

Extensive areas of dry heathland vegetation occur on the tops of the hills and ridges. These areas are dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris* and bell heather *Erica cinerea*, commonly with dwarf gorse *Ulex minor*, grasses such as wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* and sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*, and a rich diversity of lichens. Humid heath occurs on less free-draining soils. It is dominated by heather and characterised by the presence of cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*. Humid heath grades into areas of wet heath along the valley bottoms where both cross-leaved heath and purple moor-grass are abundant. These wet heath areas are also characterised by the presence of bog-mosses such as *Sphagnum compactum*, carnivorous plants such as round-leaved *Drosera rotundifolia* and oblong-leaved sundews *D. intermedia*, and common *Eriophorum angustifolium* and hare's-tail cottongrasses *E. vaginatum*. A number of nationally scarce and uncommon plant species occur in patches of bare wet peat within the wet heath, often along tracks and pathways. These include the club-moss *Lycopodiella inundata*, white beak-sedge *Rhynchospora alba* and allseed *Radiola linoides*.

Within Woolmer Forest, Cranmer Pond is an example of an acid peat-stained pond. This 8 ha pond is thought to originate from peat-cutting, and has an average depth of 1 m. The aquatic flora is comprised of bulbous rush *Juncus bulbosus* var. *fluitans*, which grows submerged and forms dense mats at the margins, and bog-mosses which grow in shallower areas. To the north and south of Cranmer Pond are areas of transition mires and quaking bogs.

Seepage mires and other waterlogged areas are minor features amongst predominantly wet heath habitat. Seepages are fed from a mix of acidic and calcareous sources, and give rise to a series of pool and hummock structures within the mire. White beak-sedge occurs along with a range of bog-mosses, common and hare's-tail cottongrasses, bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccos* and the rare marsh clubmoss *Lycopodiella inundata*.

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:

- Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*
- European dry heaths
- Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds. (Acid peat-stained lakes and ponds)
- Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*. (Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath)
- Transition mires and quaking bogs. (Very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface)

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

Register reference number: UK0030304

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

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