

COUNTY: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE **SITE NAME:** SALCEY FOREST

District: South Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes

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

Local Planning Authorities: South Northamptonshire District Council
Milton Keynes Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SP 810513

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 153 **1:10,000:** SP 85 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1970 **Date of Last Revision:** 1970

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984 **Date of Last Revision:**

Area: 153 ha 378 ac

Other Information: The area of the site has been reduced by two-thirds. Part of the site is managed as a nature reserve by the Northamptonshire Trust for Nature Conservation.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Salcey Forest is the largest ancient wood in Northamptonshire and is thus of particular importance for plants and animals dependent on continuity of woodland cover. The majority of the site, however, is commercially reafforested and the SSSI contains the greater part of the remaining 19th Century mature oak stands. These are an uncommon and extensive example of acid pedunculate oak-hazel-ash high forest, demonstrating a high degree of naturalness in structure and botanical composition. (Most examples of this geographically-widespread woodland type occur as coppice-with-standards or as recent high forest where flora and fauna has had less time to adapt). Wet ash-maple woodland is also represented on the site. The younger plantations of mixed age and species are included for the sake of the ecological integrity of the site. In most cases, when mature, these stands will maintain the continuity of woodland of deciduous affinities.

The oldest stands of some 140-150 years are dominated by pedunculate oak with ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and a mixed shrub and coppice layer of, among others, hazel *Corylus avellana*, both hawthorns *Crataegus monogyna* and *C. oxyacanthoides*, field maple *Acer campestre*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and sallows *Salix caprea* and *S. cinerea*.

The ground flora is characteristically diverse, varying with differences in soil chemistry, drainage and canopy shade. Widespread species include bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, false-brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, pendulous sedge *Carex pendula*, enchanter's nightshade *Circaea lutetiana* and primrose *Primula vulgaris*. A number of locally-rare plants occur, such as thin-spiked wood-sedge *Carex strigosa* and bird's-nest orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*. The abundance of ferns is a notable feature of the least-disturbed areas.

The ride grasslands and margins are a valuable habitat for many plants and as feeding and breeding areas for invertebrates, particularly lepidoptera. The forest has nationally and regionally notable moth species and a rich breeding bird community.