

COUNTY: EAST SUSSEX SITE NAME: FORE WOOD

DISTRICT: ROTHER

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

Local Planning Authority: ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 753128 Area: 21.5 (ha.) 52.6 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheets 1:50,000: 199 1:10,000: TQ 71 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1966 Date of Last Revision: 1973

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

Other Information:

Fore Wood SSSI forms part of the larger Royal Society for the Protection of Birds reserve.

Reasons for Notification:

The interest of this particular area is twofold; it includes one of only 5 East Sussex examples of ghyll woodland (a habitat which is otherwise restricted to the Atlantic coast of Britain) and it contains a rich breeding community which includes hawfinch, woodcock and greater woodpecker.

The wood itself is rather variable and much modified in places. Areas of neglected pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* with hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* coppice also contain ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and birch *Betula pendula* above a sparse ground flora of ivy *Hedera helix* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus*. Some areas have been thinned and shrubs, particularly hazel *Corylus avellana* encouraged. Systematic clearing of old sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* coppice has also taken place in order to promote oak high forest. In these thinned and cleared areas bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*, enchanters nightshade *Circaea lutetiana* and honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* form a dense ground flora.

The wood contains examples of Sussex ghylls. These steep ravines have been created by the vigorous down-cutting of streams into the sandstone. Alder *Alnus glutinosa* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* trees form a closed canopy and help create an unusual micro-climate which is more typical of the western shores of the UK. Thus several 'Atlantic' plant species are found here including 3 rare mosses and the hay-scented buckler fern *Dryopteris aemula*. Greater woodrush *Luzula sylvatica* and hard fern *Blechnum spicant* are more common 'Atlantic' species.

In addition to the modification of woodland type and the planting of trees and shrubs to attract birds, several glades and a pond have also been created. As yet the birdlife is not of exceptional quality but can be expected to improve considerably. At present

breeding birds of note include hawfinch, sparrowhawk, woodcock, cuckoo, tawny owl, greater spotted woodpecker, nuthatch and willow tit.