

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

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name: The Stiperstones and The Hollies
Unitary Authority/County: Shropshire
SAC status: Designated on 1 April 2005
Grid reference: SJ375006
SAC EU code: UK0012810
Area (ha): 601.46
Component SSSI: The Stiperstones and The Hollies SSSI

Site description:

The Stiperstones are a series of tors which outcrop along a prominent quartzite ridge to the south-west of Shrewsbury. The ridge supports extensive and varied heathland vegetation showing transitions between southern lowland and northern upland heaths. The heathland vegetation varies with altitude and aspect. This is particularly evident in the steep sided valleys on the western side of the hill where bell heather *Erica cinerea* and western gorse *Ulex gallii* are characteristic of south facing slopes, whereas bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* is particularly abundant on north facing slopes. On higher ground, cowberry *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* and crowberry *Empetrum nigrum* are significant components of the heathland. Typical heathland herbs include heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and common cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense*. Heather *Calluna vulgaris* is abundant or dominant in all these communities. The tors and boulders of the upper slopes provide important habitat for several species of moss and also support a diverse lichen flora.

The northern end of the ridge, known as The Hollies, is an area of 'holly parkland' of great antiquity and considered to be unique for both its size and for the age of the holly *Ilex aquifolium* trees. These trees, which have unusually large girths, are at least 250 years old. However, many of the largest trees are likely to be over 300 years, and some possibly as old as 400 years. As well as being recognized as one of the oldest stands of holly in Europe, the hollies are considered to be amongst the oldest trees of any species in Britain. In the past the holly trees were pollarded to provide winter fodder, and as a result of this type of management they have well developed crutches in which rowans *Sorbus aucuparia* have become established.

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:

- European dry heaths
- Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles. (Western acidic oak woodland)

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

Register reference number: UK0012810

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trew Salmon*

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