

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

Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Name: Ox Close
Unitary Authority/County: North Yorkshire
SAC status: Designated on 1 April 2005
Grid reference: SD984903
SAC EU code: UK0030234
Area (ha): 141.25
Component SSSI: Ox Close SSSI

Site description:

Ox Close and the streams which drain it, particularly the Eller Beck, comprise a site outstanding for its assemblage of plants indicative of metal-rich soils (metallophytes). It is unusual in that it encompasses the three main situations in which metallophytes occur in the UK, including near-natural forms on cliffs and scars, old spoil-heaps from past lead-mining, and metal-enriched river alluvium associated with the Eller Beck. The plant species concerned are thrift *Armeria maritima*, moonwort *Botrychium lunaria*, Pyrenean scurvygrass *Cochlearia pyrenaica*, spring sandwort *Minuartia verna* (known locally as leadwort) and alpine penny-cress *Thlaspi caerulescens*. All these species are able to tolerate the high levels of lead and zinc in the soil, and thus are characteristic of such 'metalliferous' plant communities.

The broad-leaved woodland on Haw Bank contains hazel coppice *Corylus avellana* and specimens of small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* and large-leaved lime *T. platyphyllos* all of which are rare in the Dales. Lime-rich flushes adjacent to the Eller Beck support a large population of grass of Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, together with lesser clubmoss *Selaginella selaginoides* and flat-sedge *Blysmus compressus*, and in drier areas there is herb-rich limestone grassland with for example common rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium* and wild thyme *Thymus praecox*.

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:

- Calaminarian grasslands of the *Violetalia calaminariae*. (Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals)
- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*). (Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone)
- *Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines. (Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes)*

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: UK0030234
Date of registration: 14 June 2005
Signed: *Trevor Salmon*
On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment,
Food and Rural Affairs