COUNTY: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  SITE NAME: BADSADDLE, WITHMALE PARK AND BUSH WALK WOODS

District: Wellingborough

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

Local Planning Authority: Wellingborough District Council

National Grid Reference: SP 833720

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 141  1:10,000: SP 87 SW


Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986 (pt)  Date of Last Revision:  

Area: 24.9 ha  61.5 ac

Other Information: Badsaddle Wood was formerly a separate site under the 1949 Act and is now being included with Withmale Park and Bush Walk Woods under the 1981 Act.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Badsaddle, Withmale Park and Bush Walk Woods lie to the north-east of Northampton on calcareous soils derived from Boulder Clay. Withmale Park and Bush Walk form one unit separated by a road. Badsaddle Wood lies to the north-west and is surrounded by arable fields.

There are strong indications from the ground flora that this is an ancient woodland and an important example of the wet ash Fraxinus excelsior/maple Acer campestre type. Until relatively recently this has been managed as coppice with standards.

The canopy is dominated by oak Quercus robur and ash Fraxinus excelsior with residual elm Ulmus glabra. The shrub layer which still shows coppice compartments of varying age, comprises mainly field maple Acer campestre and hazel Corylus avellana with hawthorn Crataegus monogyna and some dogwood Cornus sanguinea, Guelder rose Viburnum opulus, spindle Euonymus europaeus and Midland hawthorn C. oxyacanthoides also occur. The ground flora is dominated by dog’s mercury Mercurialis perennis, bluebell Hyacinthoides non-scripta and locally ramsoms Allium ursinum together with other typical woodland species such as wood anemone Anemone nemorosa, giant bellflower Campanula latifolia, enchanter’s nightshade Circaea lutetiana and herb Bennet Geum urbanum. Bush Walk, although of a similar structure, has been managed to produce a more open canopy. The resulting ground flora contains several species of note such as herb Paris Paris quadrifolia, Goldilocks buttercup Ranunculus auricomus, and four species of orchid including greater butterfly Platanthera chlorantha. Badsaddle Wood also supports the largest colony in the county and possibly in the region of the rare yellow star of Bethlehem Gagea lutea. Along the rides and in the wetter areas to the north of Withmale Park, willows Salix spp. occur with meadowsweet Filipendula ulmaria and tufted hair-grass Deschampsia cespitosa. There are also a number of soft rides which support a good flora where undisturbed. Narrow ditches and a stream cross the northern part of Withmale Wood.

The woods support good numbers of typical birds and the rides are a valuable habitat for butterflies and
other insects.