

COUNTY: SHROPSHIRE SITE NAME: CHORLEY COVERT & DESERTS WOOD

DISTRICT: Bridgnorth

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

Local Planning Authority: SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, Bridgnorth District Council

National Grid Reference: SO 705840 Area: 74.3 (ha.) 183.6 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 138 1:10,000: SO 68 SE, SO 78 SW

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): – Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
New site.

Reasons for Notification:

The Coal Measures plateau of south-east Shropshire, dissected by tributaries of the Severn, is a comparatively well wooded part of the county. Woods occur mainly in the stream valleys, and several areas retain a high degree of scientific interest. These woods occur on geological strata and soils similar to those of the Wyre Forest, a few miles to the south, and this is reflected in the flora and fauna. However, because of this geographical separation, the Wyre Forest is treated as a separate site.

Chorley Covert and Deserts Wood comprise a large wood, mainly on acid soils which have developed from the Kinlet Beds of the Coal Measures. Most of the wood is dominated by sessile oak *Quercus petraea* and downy birch *Betula pubescens*, with abundant hazel *Corylus avellana*. The oak-dominated areas have a ground flora which is characteristic of acid soils and which consists of creeping soft-grass *Holcus mollis*, wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*, bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and, locally, heather *Calluna vulgaris* and bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*.

Alongside the stream, damper, more fertile soils have developed, and these support woodland in which alder *Alnus glutinosa* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* are abundant. The ground flora in this community includes woodruff *Galium odoratum*, ramsons *Allium ursinum*, yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* and sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, and the uncommon species, alternate-leaved golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium alternifolium* and columbine *Aquilegia vulgaris*. The comparatively scarce shrub, alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus* also occurs.

Chorley Covert and Deserts Wood are especially valuable as a habitat for butterflies. Several uncommon species occur including the white admiral *Ladoga camilla* which here is at the northern limit of its range.