

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

## Citation for Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

<b>Name:</b>	Exmoor Heaths
<b>Unitary Authority/County:</b>	Devon, Somerset
<b>SAC status:</b>	Designated on 1 April 2005
<b>Grid reference:</b>	SS864419
<b>SAC EU code:</b>	UK0030040
<b>Area (ha):</b>	10705.87
<b>Component SSSI:</b>	Exmoor Coastal Heaths SSSI, North Exmoor SSSI, South Exmoor SSSI, West Exmoor Coast and Woods SSSI

### Site description:

The site contains large areas of upland heath with transitions to tracts of old sessile oak *Quercus petraea* woods. Wet heath (deergrass – cross-leaved heath *Trichophorum cespitosum* – *Erica tetralix* heath) predominates on gently-sloping and level ground. It is extremely variable in nature with heather *Calluna vulgaris* or purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* dominating and frequent cross-leaved heath, bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* and deergrass. In some areas *Molinia* and *Calluna* are more-or-less co-dominant. There are transitions to upland dry heath on well-drained, steeper slopes and to deergrass – hare's-tail cotton grass *Eriophorum vaginatum* blanket mire on deeper peat, where the northern species crowberry *Empetrum nigrum* occurs.

The dry heaths are notable because they contain extensive areas of types most often found in the lowlands (western gorse – bristle bent *Ulex gallii* – *Agrostis curtisii* heath), alongside predominantly upland types (heather – bilberry heath), together with heather – western gorse heath. Bell heather *Erica cinerea* can also be abundant. The associated valley mires support the oceanic species pale butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica* and ivy-leaved bellflower *Wahlenbergia hederacea*. The Exmoor heaths are also important as the largest stronghold for the heath fritillary butterfly *Mellicta athalia*, associated with sheltered slopes in the transition to woodland.

The high cliffs and steep slopes support sparse maritime plant communities within a mosaic of heath, scrub, bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and grassland.

**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:

- Blanket bogs\*
- Alkaline fens. (Calcium-rich springwater-fed fens)
- European dry heaths
- Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*. (Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath)
- Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles. (Western acidic oak woodland)
- Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts

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: UK0030040

Date of registration: 14 June 2005

Signed: *Trevor Salmon*

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