

Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons SPA :

County: Hampshire **Site name:** **Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons**

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

Local Planning Authorities: Hampshire County Council, Hart District Council, Rushmoor Borough Council

National grid reference: SU834588

Ordnance Survey sheet: **1:50,000:** 175,186 **1:10,000:** SU85 NW, SU85NE, SU86 SW, SU76 SE

Date notified (under 1949 Act): 1979 (Yateley Common)

Date notified (under 1981 Act): 1985, 1986, 1993

Date of last revision: 20 October 2000

Area: 921.41 ha

Reasons for notification

This site is notified for its heathland and young conifer plantation which supports an internationally important population of Dartford warbler and populations of two other internationally important species, woodlark and nightjar. The scrub/heathland interface supports a particularly rich invertebrate fauna including a number of nationally scarce species. It also supports an outstanding Dragonfly assemblage.

General description

Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons is one of the largest remnants of lowland heathland in the Thames Basin. The majority of the site is on gently undulating plateau gravels; the valley bog at Castle Bottom is underlain by Bagshot Beds and Bracklesham Sands.

The dry heathland areas are dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris*, bell heather *Erica cinerea* and dwarf gorse (*Ulex minor*, grading locally to humid heath dominated by heather, bell heather, cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, or acid grassland with dense bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, silver birch *Betula pendula* and pine *Pinus sylvestris* scrub form part of the mosaic. Small areas of grass heath are dominated by bristle-leaved bent grass *Agrostis curtisii*, here near the eastern limit of its distribution. The nationally scarce upright chickweed *Moenchia erecta* is found together with the largest Hampshire colony of the locally uncommon moonwort fern *Botrychium lunaria*. The locally uncommon meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* is found towards the south westerly end of the site.

Valley mire vegetation at the site is dominated by tussocky purple moor-grass and bog myrtle *Myrica gale*. The rich bog flora associated with the more open areas includes white

beak-sedge *Rhynchospora alba*, two species of sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* and *D. intermedia*, dodder *Cuscuta epithymum*, bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* and bog pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*.

The site supports at least 19 species of dragonfly and*damselfly out of a total of 37 resident species in Britain. These include two nationally scarce species, the small red damselfly *Ceragrion tenellum* and the downy emerald *Cordulia aenea*, both associated with bog. Heathland invertebrates include the nationally rare bee *Hyaeus gibbus* and a number of nationally scarce species including two native cockroaches, the dusky cockroach *Ectobius lapponicus* and lesser cockroach *E. panzeri*, and the silver-studded blue butterfly *Plebejus argus*. The nationally rare conopid fly *Myopa fasciata* is recorded from the scrub/heath interface.

The mosaic of open heath, young plantings and broad rides within coniferous plantation, and scrub provides habitat for a number of heathland birds. These include stonechat *Saxicola torquata* together with three highly vulnerable species of bird, woodlark *Lullula arborea*, nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*. The site is also a regular feeding habitat for the hobby *Falco subbuteo*.

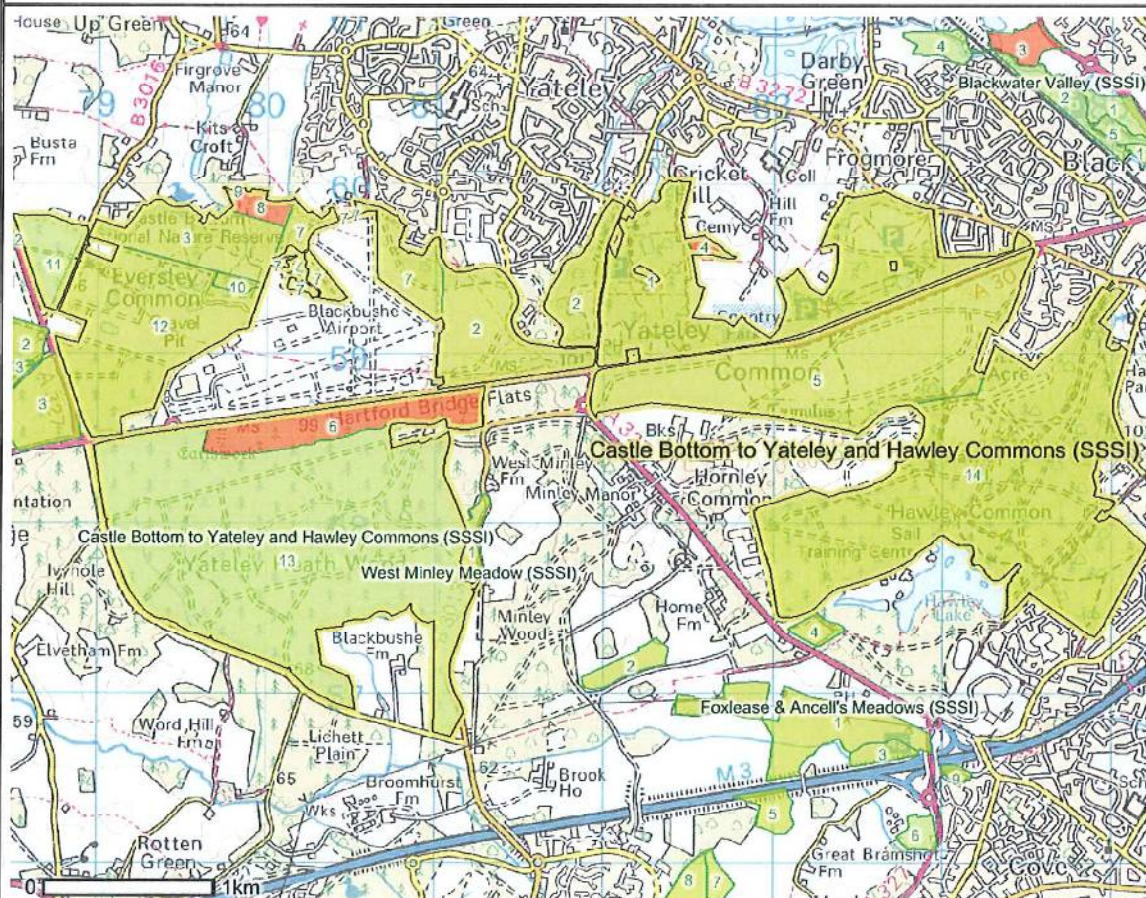
Other information

1. Part of this site is a Country Park and part is registered and confirmed common land.
2. This site includes land which has been proposed for designation as a Special Protection Area under Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds. Nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler are listed on Annex 1 of the Directive.
3. Woodlark and Dartford warbler are specially protected by being listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
4. Woodlark, nightjar and hobby are priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
5. Lowland heath is a priority habitat in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.



Nature on the Map

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| | □ England |
| ■ Favourable Condition | |
| ■ Unfavourable Recovering | |
| ■ Unfavourable no change | |
| ■ Unfavourable Declining | |
| ■ Part Destroyed | |
| ■ Destroyed | |
| ■ Not Assessed | |

EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds Special Protection Area (SPA)

Name: Thames Basin Heaths

Unitary Authority/County: Bracknell Forest; Hampshire; Surrey; Windsor and Maidenhead.

Site description: The Thames Basin Heaths SPA is a composite site that is located across the counties of Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire in southern England. It encompasses all or parts of Ash to Brookwood Heaths Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Bourley and Long Valley SSSI, Bramshill SSSI, Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI, Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons SSSI, Chobham Common SSSI, Colony Bog and Bagshot Heaths SSSI, Eelmoor Marsh SSSI, Hazeley Heath SSSI, Horsell Common SSSI, Ockham and Wisley Commons SSSI, Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths SSSI and Whitmoor Common SSSI.

The open heathland habitats overlie sand and gravel sediments which give rise to sandy or peaty acidic soils, supporting dry heathy vegetation on well-drained slopes, wet heath on low-lying shallow slopes and bogs in valleys. The site consists of tracts of heathland, scrub and woodland, once almost continuous, but now fragmented into separate blocks by roads, urban development and farmland. Less open habitats of scrub, acidic woodland and conifer plantations dominate, within which are scattered areas of open heath and mire. The site supports important breeding populations of a number of birds of lowland heathland, especially nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and woodlark *Lullula arborea*, both of which nest on the ground, often at the woodland/heathland edge, and Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*, which often nests in gorse *Ulex* sp. Scattered trees and scrub are used for roosting.

Together with the nearby Ashdown Forest and Wealden Heaths SPAs, the Thames Basin Heaths form part of a complex of heathlands in southern England that support important breeding bird populations.

Size of SPA: The SPA covers an area of 8274.72 ha.

Qualifying species:

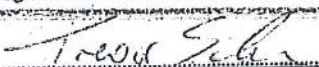
The site qualifies under article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of the following species listed in Annex I in any season:

Annex I species	Count and season	Period	% of GB population
Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	264 churring males – breeding	1998/99	7.8%
Woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i>	149 pairs – breeding	1997	9.9%
Dartford warbler <i>Sylvia undata</i>	445 pairs – breeding	1999	27.8%

Non-qualifying species of interest: Hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*, merlin *Falco columbarius*, short-eared owl *Asio flammeus* and kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (all Annex I species) occur in non-breeding numbers of less than European importance (less than 1% of the GB population).

Status of SPA:

Thames Basin Heaths was classified as a Special Protection Area on 9 March 2005.

This citation/map relates to a site entered in the Register of European sites for Great Britain.	
Register reference number	UK
Date of registration	9 MARCH 2005
Signed	
On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs	