

COUNTY: OXFORDSHIRE

SITE NAME: WARREN BANK

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

Local Planning Authorities: South Oxfordshire District Council

National Grid Reference: SU653857

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 175 **1:10,000:** SU68 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1972 **Date of Last Revision:** 1977

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

Area: 3.1 ha 7.5 ac

Description and Reasons for Notification

This site supports examples of the unimproved chalk grassland and scrub habitats which were formerly widespread in the southern Chilterns, but which have now largely been ploughed and converted to arable or re-seeded pasture.

Warren Bank is situated on a steep south-east facing slope on shallow, well-drained calcareous silty soils of the Upton 1 series over chalk.

The site is divided into three fenced paddocks which have been grazed at different intensities. The species-rich sward contains many of the plants typically associated with chalk grassland including rockrose *Helianthemum nummularium*, horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa* and field scabious *Knautia arvensis*, together with more local species such as chalk milkwort *Polygala calcarea*, pale toadflax *Linaria repens* and bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*. Autumn felwort *Gentianella amarella*, ploughman's spikenard *Inula conyza* and deadly nightshade *Atropa belladonna* occur towards the edges of the site, which supports mixed scrubland dominated by hawthorn, hazel and dogwood.

The south-facing sheltered conditions at Warren Bank provide an ideal habitat for many species of invertebrate. Insects recorded include the dark green fritillary *Argynnis aglaja*, green hairstreak *Callophrys rubi* and marbled white butterflies *Melanargia galathea*, and the great green bush cricket *Tettigonia viridissima*.