

## CITATION

**CRAIG LEITH AND MYRETON HILL  
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST**  
Clackmannanshire

Site code: 420

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NS 867979

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 58  
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 366

AREA: 177.12 hectares

## NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

**Biological:** Upland habitats: Upland assemblage  
Woodlands: Upland mixed ash woodland  
Vascular plants: Sticky catchfly *Lychnis viscaria*  
Butterflies: Northern brown argus *Aricia artaxerxes*

## DESCRIPTION

Craig Leith and Myreton Hill SSSI is located just to the north-west of Alva on the southern flanks of the Ochil Hills. The site is important for its assemblage of upland habitats, the ash woodland in Balquharn Glen, the wood pasture on the slopes of Myreton Hill, and the populations of the sticky catchfly *Lychnis viscaria* and the northern brown argus *Aricia artaxerxes*.

The variety of upland vegetation types is one of the richest in Clackmannanshire, with particularly good representation of calcareous grasslands. Run-off from the basic igneous cliffs of Craig Leith and other outcrops has led to localised enrichment, where diverse calcareous grassland has developed. Characteristic plant communities include rock rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, wild thyme *Thymus praecox*, meadow oat-grass *Helictotrichon pratense* and crested hair-grass *Koeleria macrantha*. Extensive tracts of acid grassland form mosaics with the calcareous grassland. The transitional grassland communities surrounding the numerous rock outcrops support intricate and sequential relationships between acid and calcareous grassland types. Scattered widely across the site are small areas of groundwater flushes dominated by mosses and sedges forming intimate mosaics with the grassland communities. Finally, the rock habitats are included as a component of the upland assemblage recognised for the crevice vegetation on crags, rock ledges supporting uncommon plants, and rock outcrops and faces supporting species such as the nationally scarce mosses *Hedwigia integrifolia* and *Rhytidium rugosum*.

The lower slopes of Myreton Hill retain remnants of an abandoned wood pasture system with evidence of pollarding. This open wood is dominated by mature ash, with some oak, wild cherry, hazel and isolated stands of blackthorn. In Balquharn Glen the mature upland mixed ash woodland is confined to the lower, more inaccessible slopes of the gorge. Along with the wood pasture, this nationally rare woodland type merits recognition as a feature on this site.

The rock ledges and crevices on Craig Leith provide a niche for a large population of the rare sticky catchfly *Lychnis viscaria*. The vegetation on the cliffs and rock

outcrops is rich with a number of other uncommon species, including wood bitter-vetch *Vicia orobus* and bloody crane's-bill *Geranium sanguineum*. Steep rocky slopes and outcrops are widespread across the site and support a diverse range of species including wood crane's-bill *Geranium sylvaticum* and the grass mountain melick *Melica nutans*.

The site supports a breeding colony of northern brown argus butterfly *Aricia artaxerxes*. The caterpillar of this nationally scarce species feeds on the abundant rock rose growing in the calcareous grassland below Craig Leith.

## **NOTIFICATION HISTORY**

First notified under the 1981 Act: 30 March 1990

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 11 February 2011 and 29 November 2016 (citation only)

## **REMARKS**

Measured area of site corrected (from 176.59 ha).