

**CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES**

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

**GWEUNYDD ESGAIRDRAENLLWYN
(ESGAIRDRAENLLWYN PASTURES)**

Date of Notification: 1988

National Grid Reference: SO 084820

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 136
1:25,000 Sheet number: SO 08

Site Area: 12.7 ha

Description:

This site consists of several fields of unimproved rough grazing in the valley of the River Ithon. The land slopes gently upwards from the flat valley bottom. A variety of grassland and mire types occur on the site, in particular five principal vegetation communities, some of which are uncommon in Radnor. A number of locally uncommon plant species have been recorded from the site.

The most frequent communities occurring on both the valley floor and sloping ground above it are dry acidic and mesotrophic grasslands. The latter is dominated by crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. It is only moderately diverse and typical species include pignut *Conopodium majus* and bulbous buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*. The dry acidic grassland occurs on some moderately steep east-facing slopes and in a mosaic with the mesotrophic grassland. It is dominated by common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina* and has a variety of associated herbs, including harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, bitter-vetch *Lathyrus montanus*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and betony *Stachys officinalis*. The nationally uncommon wood bitter-vetch *Vicia orobus* has been recorded in this grassland. Steep dry banks may be more species-rich and support a more neutral vegetation type of limited distribution in Radnor, which includes species such as lady's bedstraw *Galium verum* and burnet-saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*.

At the base of the slope below the acid grassland (and locally elsewhere) there are small stands of small-sedge communities on slightly base-enriched flushed ground. This unusual vegetation type is characterised by abundant carnation sedge *Carex panicea*, frequent purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and a fairly high cover of pleurocarpous mosses – mainly *Calliergon cuspidatum*. Less frequent associates include a variety of other small-sedge species, marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*, common marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre* and marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*.

Extensive stands of species-rich marshy grassland occur in the valley bottom. The species composition of this vegetation is somewhat variable; common sedge *Carex nigra*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and rushes *Juncus effusus* and *acutiflorus* are locally abundant with a variety of associated species such as wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* and common valerian *Valeriana officinalis*. Fen bedstraw *Galium uliginosum* occurs sparsely.

Swamp communities are well represented in the site. A bed of lesser pond-sedge *Carex acutiformis* has developed at a stream confluence with the Ithon in the northern part of the site. An adjacent area supports the locally uncommon bladder-sedge *Carex vesicaria*, which also occurs in two small swamp areas at the southern end of the site. Wood club-rush *Scirpus sylvaticus* also occurs here. An interesting zonation occurs between tall-herb communities with yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus*, which flank the tributary streams, and the sedge swards by the riverside. Variable associates include reed canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, marsh willowherb *Epilobium palustre* and bog stitchwort *Stellaria alsine*.

Some agriculturally modified grassland (mesotrophic and acidic) is included within the site. This unploughed grassland is considered an essential part of the grazing management unit.

The site includes a variety of derelict hedgerows and other plantings. These in association with the river and surrounding grassland communities provide good habitat for breeding passerine bird species. The otter may also benefit from this mixture of habitat.

*This document is **NOT** a definitive legal version and has been formatted, updated and partially edited for use on the CCW Web site. This document should not be used in any legal proceedings, public enquiry or any other hearing or appeal. If you require a full legal copy of the document please contact CCW in writing.*