

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

COED ABERDULAS

Date of Notification: 1994

National Grid Reference: SO 064639

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 147
1:25,000 Sheet number: SO 06/16

Site Area: 3.7 ha

Description:

Coed Aberdulas includes a small but unusually diverse area of broadleaved woodland supporting a variety of plant communities, two of which are rare in Wales and of restricted distribution in Britain. Transitions between woodland and other important wildlife habitats such as unimproved pasture, wetland and scrub provide added interest.

The site is situated along both banks of the River Dulas, just above its confluence with the River Ithon, to the north of Llandrindod Wells. The underlying geology of the area comprises Ordovician rocks overlain by glacial and alluvial deposits. The level ground by the river is characterised by a typical alluvial brown soil, whilst the majority of the site lies on gently sloping ground characterised by a cambic stagnogley soil. There are numerous springs along the slopes, particularly to the east of the Dulas at the northern end of the site.

The drier woodland at the top of the slopes is dominated by pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, with an understorey of hazel *Corylus avellana*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and some silver birch *Betula pendula*, crab apple *Malus sylvestris* and rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*. The ground flora is characterised by an abundance of bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* with frequent pignut *Conopodium majus*, creeping soft-grass *Holcus mollis* and greater stitchwort *Stellaria holostea* and occasional honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, lesser celandine *Ranunculus ficaria* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. Wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, which is usually scarce in Welsh oakwoods, and wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* are locally prominent.

There are several areas of wetter woodland associated with various springs within the site. The largest and wettest area has a canopy of alder *Alnus glutinosa* over a shrub layer of rusty willow *Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*, downy birch *Betula pubescens* and guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus* and a field layer dominated by greater tussock-sedge *Carex paniculata*. A range of characteristic wetland plants may be found between the sedge tussocks, including common marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*, marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*, opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, hemlock water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata*, broad buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, water mint *Mentha aquatica* and common

valerian *Valeriana officinalis*. This type of woodland is rare in Wales. Where the ground is a little less boggy the canopy comprises alder and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and the ground flora is characterised by frequent meadowsweet, opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage and creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, with occasional yellow pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum* and remote sedge *Carex remota*. The wooded banks of the Dulas support a number of other woodland plants such as lady-fern *Athyrium filix-femina*, moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina*, broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*, giant fescue *Festuca gigantea*, and primrose *Primula vulgaris*.

On the western side of the Dulas at the northern end of the site, riverside trees give way to a grassy bank that has abundant common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, frequent Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, common bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*, field woodrush *Luzula campestris*, common cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, the moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* and a wide range of associates, including common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and fairy flax *Linum catharticum*. Adjoining the alder woodland on the east bank of the Dulas there is an area of sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acuitflorus* pasture interspersed with tall-fen vegetation in which meadowsweet, yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus*, greater tussock-sedge and bladder-sedge *Carex vesicaria* are all locally prominent. Other common species here include wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Yorkshire-fog, common marsh-bedstraw, yellow loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris*, greater skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata* and the moss *Calliergon cuspidatum*. A dry bank above this marsh supports grassland characterised by common bent, tormentil, sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, common bird's-foot-trefoil and betony *Stachys officinalis*.

On the flood plain of the River Ithon, between the woodland and the Dulas, is an ungrazed alluvial terrace that supports willow scrub *Salix spp.* and tall vegetation variously dominated by common nettle *Urtica dioica*, meadowsweet and reed-canary grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, with a range of associated species, including wood club-rush *Scirpus sylvaticus*. This area provides cover for otters *Lutra lutra*.

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