

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

**SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION**

**POWYS** **COED MAES-MAWR, COED ESGAIRNEIRIAU  
A CHEUNANT CAECENAU**

**Date of Notification:** 1985, 1994

**National Grid Reference:** SH 774095

**O.S. Maps:** 1:50,000 Sheet number: 124  
1:10,000 Sheet number: SH 70 NE

**Site Area:** 25.6 ha

**Description:**

The site is of special interest as one of the best examples in Montgomeryshire of a western oak - birch woodland with a rich atlantic bryophyte and lichen flora.

The site consists of Coed Maes-mawr a Choed Esgairneiriau, a continuous block of woodland on steep north and west-facing slopes, and the deep wooded Ceunant Caecenau which runs in a north-westerly direction towards the Afon Dulas near Aberllefenni. Acidic shales and grits of Ordovician age outcrop in places, creating humid rocky ravines. Shallow podzolic soils predominate on the less steep slopes, whilst ground water gley soils are confined to flush lines and stream sides.

Sessile oak *Quercus petraea* is the dominant canopy species, associated frequently with downy birch *Betula pubescens*. To the south-west of the Nant Esgairneiriau stream the wood has been ungrazed for some time and a well-developed acidic ground floor of bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, heather *Calluna vulgaris* and a diverse assemblage of bryophytes is present. The commonest species include *Rhytidiadelphus loreus*, *Hypnum jutlandicum* and *Polytrichum formosum*. In the humid ravines a notable western Atlantic flora is present, including the moss *Dicranodontum denudatum* and the liverworts *Mylia taylori*, *Bazzania trilobata* and *Plagiochila spinulosa*, amongst others. Wilson's filmy-fern *Hymenophyllum wilsonii* is also present.

A notable lichen flora has developed on the trees in this area including *Parmelia taylorensis*, *P. horrescens* and *Sticta* spp., which are indicative of low atmospheric pollution. The *Parmeliatum laevigatae* lichen community characteristic of woodlands in high rainfall areas is particularly well developed here. Other notable lichens, which at this site are associated with mature ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* present in Ceunant Caecenau, include *Sticta canariensis* (blue-green morphotype), *Parmeliella jamesii* and *Peltigera collina*.

In places the ground flora of Cenuant Caecenau shows evidence of base-enrichment in contrast with that of Coed Maes-mawr a Choed Esgairneiriau which consists predominantly of acidic soil-loving species. Here primrose *Primula vulgaris*, early- purple orchid *Orchis mascula*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* and yellow archangel *Galeobdolon luteum* are present.

A population of dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* has been recorded from the hazel hedgerow which forms part of the northern boundary of Caecenau gorge.

The whole woodland supports a typical range of western sessile oak woodland birds, including pied flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* and redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*.

**Remarks:**

The dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* is listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

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