

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

CAERPHILLY

CEFN ONN

Date of Notification: 26 January 2011

National Grid Reference: ST 173 852

OS Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 151
1:10,000 Sheet number: ST 18 NE

Site Area: 6.3 ha

Description:

Cefn Onn is of special interest for its species-rich calcareous grassland and for its important population of frog orchid *Coeloglossum viride*, an uncommon and declining grassland plant.

The site is situated on a dolomitic limestone ridge 2km south-east of Caerphilly and 1.5km north of Cardiff. Cefn Onn lies on thin soils, with level or gently sloping ground, at an altitude of 250m. The underlying geology is of carboniferous limestone, which is a sedimentary rock consisting of calcium carbonate.

Species-rich calcareous grassland occurs on knolls of limestone with thinner soils, surrounded by flatter, more improved grassland, and around the edges of the disused quarry. It is characterised by a high herb cover.

Grasses, such as quaking-grass *Briza media*, sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina*, red fescue *F. rubra*, heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens* and crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* occur frequently. Accompanying herbs include common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, wild thyme *Thymus polytrichus*, dwarf thistle *Cirsium acaule*, spring sedge *Carex caryophyllea*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum*, autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella* and mouse-ear hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum*.

The frog orchid population here is the largest of two that remain in South Wales. This plant is frequent in the east and west corners of the site.

Grassland fungi present include some scarce species, such as olive earthtongue *Microglossum olivaceum*. Cefn Onn supports several other habitats that add to the ecological diversity of the site. These include areas of neutral grassland, acid grassland and scrub.

Remarks:

The site supports several UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats and species, including lowland calcareous grassland, lowland meadows, lowland dry acid grassland, frog orchid and olive earthtongue.

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