

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST: CITATION

CAERPHILLY

GWAUN GLEDYR SSSI

Date of Notification: 1 October 2009

National Grid Reference: ST 135870

OS Maps: Insert 1:50,000 OS sheet number: 171
1:10,000 OS sheet number: ST 18 NW

Site Area: 28.3ha

Description:

Gwaun Gledyr is of special interest for its extensive area of marshy grassland and smaller area of neutral grassland. These habitats are also associated with smaller areas of acid flush, wet heath, acid grassland and scrub. Broadleaved woodland also forms a significant percentage of the site, often as overgrown field boundaries; there is a large single area in the north west of the site.

The site consists of sixteen separate fields directly North West of Caerphilly town and about 200m east of the village of Groeswen. The SSSI is split into two blocks by the minor road known as Gypsy Lane. The site is low-lying and gently sloping down to the Nant Gledyr, with a south easterly aspect, and lies directly below the A468 Caerphilly ring road. Most of the area is overlain with glacial boulder clay, but there is some exposed sandstone of the upper Pennant measures. Soils are loamy brown podzols over the sandstone, or more commonly strongly gleyed (often waterlogged) stony loams with peaty or humose topsoil, on the boulder clay.

Marshy grassland is the most widespread habitat at Gwaun Gledyr. Generally this is dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, with other grasses such as velvet bent *Agrostis canina* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, together with tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, carnation sedge *Carex panicea* and often devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*. In places, the vegetation is more heathy with frequent cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and bog mosses *Sphagnum* sp., whilst in wetter areas, herbs such as wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, marsh pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* and marsh violet *Viola palustris* can be found. In places, these can give way to dominant sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, with a range of associated species such as ragged-robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and common marsh bedstraw *Galium palustre*.

Where soils are mildly base-rich, a particularly species-rich, uncommon form of marshy grassland can be found. Here, purple moor-grass is joined by meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, flea sedge *Carex pulicaris* and tawny sedge *C. hostiana*, together with heath spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, and saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*.

Species-rich neutral grassland can be found mostly as small areas amongst the marshy grassland throughout the site, with two larger areas in two separate fields. Here, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* occur, together with grasses such as common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and red fescue *Festuca rubra*. Much of this grassland is of the type found on more nutrient-poor ground, shown by the frequent presence of heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*, devil's-bit scabious and tormentil.

Remarks:

Gwaun Gledyr includes the following UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats: Purple moor-grass and rush pasture; Lowland dry acid grassland; Lowland meadow; Lowland Heathland.

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