

CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU  
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

SWANSEA

NANT Y CRIMP

**Date of Notification:** 2002  
**National Grid Reference:** SN 623015  
**O.S. Maps:** 1:50,000 Sheet number: 159  
1:10,000 Sheet number: SN 60 SW  
**Site Area:** 65.5 ha

**Description:**

Nant y Crimp is of special interest for its wet pastures, species-rich neutral grasslands and semi-natural woodland as well as associated scrub, which are host to several uncommon plant species. Such vegetation is now increasingly scarce in the Welsh lowlands, most having been lost to agricultural improvement.

The site is located to the north east of the village of Pontlliw, near Pontarddulais. It is an extensive series of thirty enclosures or remnant fields either side of the Nant y Crimp, a tributary of the Afon Lliw, at an altitude about 50m. The underlying bedrock is sandstone of the Lower Pennant measures of the South Wales coalfield.

Wet pastures occur throughout the site where drainage is impeded. These ~~include~~ include base-rich fen-meadow communities characterised by meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, ~~sweet vernal grass~~ *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, brown bent *Agrostis canina* and tawny *Carex hostiana* and flea sedge *C. pulicaris*. Other prominent species include devil's bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and ~~autumn hawkbit~~ *Leontodon autumnalis* whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum*.

In places, the vegetation assumes a more heathy character, with frequent cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* together with mosses such as *Polytrichum commune*, *Sphagnum auriculatum*, ~~S. fimbriatum~~ and *S. papillosum*. Where springs emerge at the ground surface, these are joined by bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, greater bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and common cotton-grass *Eriophorum angustifolium*. Saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* is also occasional throughout these swards.

~~Mire~~ Acidic marshy grassland communities are also extensive at the site. In places these are dominated by *Molinia caerulea* ~~can be of a rather grassy nature~~ with abundant frequent brown bent, tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* carnation sedge *Carex panicea*. ~~Elsewhere~~ Some of the *Molinia* vegetation is notable for its tall herbs, particularly angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, hemp agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, water mint *Mentha aquatica* and marsh violet *Viola palustris*. ~~Elsewhere~~, sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus* dominates with a range of associates, including greater bird's-foot trefoil and marsh bedstraw *Galium palustre*.

Formatted

Formatted

Formatted

In addition, some of the fields support dry, species-rich neutral grassland. Here, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* occur, together with grasses such as common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*. Species suggesting a slight acid nature to the soil can be found throughout these pastures, such as devil's bit scabious, heath grass *Danthonia decumbens* and tormentil *Potentilla erecta*.

Formatted

Wet semi-natural woodland is also found at the site. Such woodland would have been common in the lowlands alongside rivers, but is now very scarce in Wales. The woodland bordering the Nant y Crimp is one of the largest examples still in existence in the former county of West Glamorgan. The canopy is predominantly downy birch *Betula pubescens* and alder *Alnus glutinosa*, with frequent alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus* as an under shrub. There is a rich ground flora with purple moor-grass, remote sedge *Carex remota*, wavy hair-grass *Dechampsia flexuosa* and, where the canopy is more open, lawns of *Sphagnum* mosses. This wet woodland grades into drier secondary woodland which has invaded formerly open pastures, which adds diversity to the site. Here pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* becomes more dominant, with a ground flora predominantly of ivy *Hedera helix* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus*.

The site also supports small areas of acid flush dominated by bog moss *Sphagnum* species and some fringing stands of dense scrub.

Formatted

▲ Notable plant species recorded at the site include petty whin *Genista anglica*, cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccos*, narrow buckler fern *Dryopteris carthusiana* and whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum*, the latter an Atlantic species characteristic of unimproved pastures in the South Wales coalfield.

In addition, there is also a colony of the marsh fritillary butterfly at the site. This is a declining species confined, in south Wales, to wet agriculturally unimproved pastures, where its food plant, devil's bit scabious, grows in profusion.