

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

CARMARTHENSHIRE

CAEAU NANTSAIS

Date of Notification: 2000

National Grid Reference: SN 347 336

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 145
1:10,000 Sheet number: SN 33 SW

Site Area: 0.9 ha

Description:

Caeau Nantsais is of special interest for its mixture of dry and wet semi-natural grassland types.

The site consists of two fields lying next to a tributary stream of the Afon Bele, approximately 7 km north of Cynwyl Elfed in north-west Carmarthenshire. Rocks of Ordovician age comprise the underlying geology. Soils are freely draining brown earths, with some wetter areas alongside the stream.

Dry grassland is represented by both acid and neutral types. Of particular interest is the dry acid grassland on the steep slope above the stream. This vegetation is very species-rich, with a rich diversity of herbs including tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, wood bitter vetch *Lathyrus linifolius*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, betony *Stachys officinalis*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*. Common grasses include sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, red fescue *F. rubra*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*.

The neutral grassland is composed of a matrix of common bent, sweet vernal-grass, red fescue and crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, with associated herbs such as common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, common bird's-foot-trefoil, bulbous buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus* and, in places, tormentil and devil's-bit scabious.

Small areas of wet grassland and rush-pasture occur alongside the stream. The wet grassland is dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, with associates such as sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, carnation sedge *Carex panicea*, flea sedge *C. pulicaris*, tormentil and devil's bit scabious. The rush-pasture is characterised by a mixture of sharp-flowered rush and soft rush *Juncus effusus*, alongside greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus pendunculatus*, marsh bedstraw *Galium palustre* and common sorrel *Rumex acetosa*.

A thin strip of willow *Salix* spp. scrub fringes parts of the stream, with small patches of blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and gorse *Ulex europaeus* elsewhere.

Uncommon plant species include greater butterfly-orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, while green-winged orchid *Orchis morio* and moonwort *Botrychium lunaria* have been recorded in the past.

Several uncommon lepidoptera occur including marsh fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia*, small pearl-bordered fritillary *Boloria selene* and scarlet tiger moth *Callimorpha dominula*.

Remarks:

The marsh fritillary is listed on Annex II of the EC Habitats and Species Directive.

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