

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

RHOS PENRHIW

<u>Date of Notification:</u>	1993
<u>National Grid Reference:</u>	SO 042587
<u>O.S. Maps:</u>	1:50,000 Sheet number: 147 1:25,000 Sheet number: 992
<u>Site Area:</u>	4.5 ha

Description:

Rhos Penrhiw is one of the largest and most intact examples of fen-meadow surviving in west Radnorshire. It also shows interesting transitions into neutral and acid grassland with the latter community being of particular interest in its own right as a lowland representative of what is essentially an upland vegetation type.

The site situated about 2 miles south-west of Llandrindod Wells, lies on gently undulating ground immediately to the south of the Howey Brook, at an altitude of 180 metres. The underlying geology is of Silurian slates and shales, but the presence of overlying glacial clay permits a more diverse flora to flourish. It also contributes towards the generally poor drainage of the site. Shallow depressions are permanently saturated by water rising from a series of springs on the southern boundary. By contrast the tops of shallow banks have dry acid to neutral substrates. This variety in micro-topography allows a range of semi-natural grassland and mire communities to co-exist, with interesting transitional types between these extremes.

In such moist situations the most commonly occurring plant community is the purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* – meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* fen-meadow, characterised by diverse open lawns of sedges such as carnation sedge *Carex panicea*, flea sedge *C. pulicaris*, tawny sedge *C. hostiana* and common sedge *C. nigra*. Mixed in with these is a variety of herbs such as meadow thistle and devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*. Soft-rush *Juncus effusus* and sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus* are also frequent here. This community grades into a second rush-pasture community in which these two rushes are abundant over a more impoverished ground layer that includes marsh ragwort *Senecio aquaticus*, lesser spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and velvet bent *A. canina*. In the wettest areas, along springlines and old drainage channels, linear strips of rank swampy vegetation with branched but-reed *Sparganium erectum*, tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia*

cespitosa, floating sweet-grass *Glyceria fluitans* and meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* are present.

In drier areas two main grassland types occur. On acidic banks mixtures of sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and mat-grass *Nardus stricta* predominate. Herbs are also frequent in the turf, with tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, betony *Stachys officinalis* and sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella* being typically present. This type of grassland is more usually found in upland situations, and its presence here at lower altitude is unusual and is marked by the occurrence of uncommon species such as petty whin *Genista anglica* and saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*. In more low-lying parts of the site this vegetation grades into a more moisture-loving community characterised by purple moor-grass and devil's-bit scabious. The second dry grassland type is on more nutrient-rich soils. Species such as crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata* are characteristic here and are joined by other species such as betony, devil's-bit scabious, bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and yarrow *Achillea millefolium*.

The fauna of the site awaits detailed study, but curlew is a notable breeding bird.

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