

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

CAERPHILLY

RUPERRA CASTLE AND WOODLANDS

Date of Notification: 30 March 2011

National Grid Reference: ST223867

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 151
1:10,000 Sheet number: ST 28 NE

Site Area: 62.60 ha

Description:

The site is of special interest as the only known nursery roost for the greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* in the Mid and South Glamorgan Area of Search and one of only five known nursery roosts of this species in Wales. The buildings at Ruperra Castle, situated in Lower Machen, Caerphilly, support a colony of greater horseshoe bats of national and international importance.

The greater horseshoe bat occurs throughout central and southern Europe and extends eastwards across Asia as far as Japan. However, it is a rare species in Europe, and has suffered a considerable decline in central Europe. Within Great Britain, the breeding population is confined to south west England and southern Wales and comprises an estimated 6,600 animals. The Welsh population is at the north-western extremity of the species' range.

The building known as the generator block is used by the greater horseshoe bats to give birth and raise their young between spring and autumn. The old castle cellar is used by some of the greater horseshoe bats and by a small number of lesser horseshoe bats *Rhinolophus hipposideros* as a hibernation roost during the winter.

Coed Craig Ruperra, the woodland area to the north of the roost, is well used by the bats for foraging and commuting to more distant feeding and roosting areas.

Other protected species present within the site include a breeding population of the great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* in the ornamental pond within the castle grounds and the common dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*, which is present in Coed Craig Ruperra.

Remarks:

Both species of horseshoe bats, common dormouse and great crested newt are specially protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended), Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive. They are all listed on the Section 42 list of habitats and species of principal importance in Wales and are UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species.

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