

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

CARMARTHENSHIRE

GWERNYDD PENBRE

Date of Notification: 1999

National Grid Reference: SN 418028

O.S. Maps: 1: 50,000 Sheet number: 159
1: 10,000 Sheet number: SN 40 SW

Site Area: 49.2 ha

Description:

Gwernydd Penbre lies on alluvial deposits below the imposing escarpment of Mynydd Penbre near Pembrey, on the Carmarthenshire coast. It is of special interest for a range of biological features - the extensive reedbed and associated communities, the presence of the rare marsh pea *Lathyrus palustris*, the fen land invertebrate community and the presence of a strong breeding population of Cetti's warblers *Cettia cetti*. All of the site lies on former grazing marshes which in turn were won from saltmarsh communities in the 18th Century. They have since mostly reverted to areas of waterlogged pasture, often dominated by common reed *Phragmites australis* and wet carr, though areas of rush-pasture also remain.

Although formerly more intensively managed by grazing, much of the core area of Gwernydd Penbre has been rapidly colonized by reed in the last 25 years or so. It is now one of the largest reed beds in Carmarthenshire and represents a habitat resource which is rare and very localized in Wales. Dependent on the reed bed and other complementary wetland habitats are significant breeding populations of reed warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniculus* and water rail *Rallus aquaticus*. Cetti's warblers occupy the peripheral rusty willow *Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia* scrub and several pairs are believed to breed. Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* are irregular visitors to the reed bed in winter.

The southern part of the site supports a population of the nationally scarce marsh pea, here at one of its two Welsh stations. Nearby ditches hold floating mats of frogbit *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* (which is also rare in Wales), whilst extensive growths of water dock *Rumex hydrolapathum* line other ditches.

An outstanding invertebrate fauna has been recorded, with many of the species associated with reedbeds and fen. The ground beetle fauna, for example, includes local species such as *Oodes helopioides*, *Chlaenius nigricornis*, *Blethisa multipunctata* and the fenland soldier beetles *Cantharis thoracica* and *Silis ruficollis*. Other invertebrates of note are the scarce damselfly *Coenagrion pulchellum* and the hairy dragonfly *Brachytron pratense*, the leaf beetle *Donacia impressa* and two scarce snail-killing flies *Pherbellia griseola* and *Pteromicra pectorosa*. A noteworthy assemblage of wainscot moths is also present, including Webb's wainscot *Archanara*

spargani, southern wainscot *Mythimna straminea* and brown-veined wainscot *Archanara dissoluta*; the larvae of these moths develop in the stems of emergent aquatic vegetation such as reeds or bulrush *Typha latifolia*.

Remarks:

Some 19ha of the site are owned (or managed by agreement) by the Wildlife Trust: West Wales and the Llanelli Naturalists Society. All of the site is included in the *Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales* (CCW & CADW, 1998).

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