

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

MONMOUTHSHIRE

NEDERN BROOK WETLANDS, CALDICOT

Date of Notification: 1988

National Grid Reference: SO 484896

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet Number: 171/172
1:25,000 Sheet Number: ST 48 and 49

Site Area: 44.5 ha

Description:

This site is comprised of the low lying tract of land on either side of the Nedern Brook forming a shallow valley of wet meadowland about two miles long to the east of Caerwent and Caldicot. There is a matrix of habitats including improved grassland, unimproved pasture with tall herb communities and small pockets of woodland and scrub. The area is subject to seasonal flooding from the Nedern Brook so that as much as a third to half of the total area can be flooded between November and April in most years. Productive meadows which are regularly flooded are now very rare in Wales.

The soils are a mixture of heavy clays with local areas of peat, overlying Pleistocene glacial and estuarine deposits of gravel and mud which in turn overlie Dolomitic Conglomerate (Keuper) of the Triassic period in the west and Drybrook Limestone of the Carboniferous period in the east. The winter flooding represents the upper layer of water in the limestone aquifer beneath and to the north of the site.

This area is an important site for breeding birds, particularly waders, and was identified as a site of regional importance in a national survey of breeding waders of wet meadows carried out in 1982. It is of regional importance for breeding redshank, while other notable breeding species include lapwing, mute swan, shelduck, yellow wagtail and reedbunting.

The winter flooding makes this an important site for birds overwintering in the area. It is regularly used by Bewicks swans from the group which is centred on Slimbridge but ranges over a series of other sites. The Nedern Brook Wetlands and Llandegfedd Reservoir SSSI are their most important sites in Monmouthshire, and the only other regular winter population of Bewicks swans in Wales is to be found in Anglesey. In most years the maximum number at Nedern Brook is in the region of 20-30 birds but 70 were recorded in January 1983.

The site is also important for other wintering species of wildfowl and waders. There are regular counts of up to 300 redshank, unusually high numbers for a freshwater site, and records of up to

1,000 wigeon. These figures illustrate the importance of this winter area of inland freshwater and its close inter-relationship with the Severn Estuary which is less than 3 miles away at its closest point.

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