

CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

BRIDGEND

CAEAU CEFN CRIBWR

Date of Notification: 1989, 2000

National Grid Reference: SS 857832

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 170
1:10,000 Sheet number: SS 88 SW

Site Area: 25.0 ha

Description:

Caeau Cefn Cribwr is of special interest for its marshy and species-rich neutral grassland and for the association of these vegetation types with others including wet heath, woodland and scrub. It is also of special interest for populations of two notable vascular plants and a nationally scarce butterfly.

The site lies on the edge of the South Wales coalfield on Lower Coal Measures, immediately to the north of the village of Cefn Cribwr, which is situated approximately 4 km west of Bridgend. It comprises a series of pastures, located in a shallow valley, some of which are sheltered by adjacent woodland. Most of the land slopes gently, with a predominantly northerly aspect, at an altitude of between 70 and 100 m. Steeper sloping ground rises to around 120 m at the southern margin of the site. Soils are cambic stagnogleys of the Brickfield and Wilcocks Series. One enclosure in the south-west of the site is flushed by base-enriched water upwelling from springs along its southern boundary.

Most of the marshy grassland on the site has frequent to abundant purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, which is generally accompanied by tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, devil=s-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, carnation sedge *Carex panicea*, and grasses such as sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and velvet bent *Agrostis canina*. Creeping willow *Salix repens* occurs occasionally. In a few wetter localities, grasses are replaced by tall herbs such as wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris*. Many of the purple moor-grass swards include base-demanding species such as meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* and tawny sedge *Carex hostiana*. Red clover *Trifolium pratense* and selfheal *Prunella vulgaris* are also common. Floristically distinctive stands occur in the flushed south-western field. Here, meadow thistle is accompanied by frequent cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, bog-moss *Sphagnum subnitens* and flea-sedge *Carex pulicaris*.

The rest of the marshy grassland is dominated by rushes. Swards on particularly wet ground close to the base-rich springs in the south-west of the site have abundant blunt-flowered rush *Juncus subnodulosus*, alongside carnation sedge, devil=s-bit scabious and species such as marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*, wild angelica, tawny sedge and flea sedge. Most stands of rush-pasture occur on slightly drier, more acidic substrates and are typically dominated by sharp-flowered rush

Juncus acutiflorus, with associated herbs including common marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*, greater bird-foot-trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus* and water mint *Mentha aquatica*.

Dry, neutral grassland is present on relatively free-draining ground in the northernmost fields and close to the southern boundary of the site. It is typified by grasses such as common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and crested dog-s-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, together with broad-leaved herbs such as common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, common birds-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and red clover *Trifolium pratense*. Most swards also include heath grass *Danthonia decumbens*, devil-s-bit scabious and tormentil. Rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus* occurs locally.

Many of the plant communities are closely juxtaposed, with well displayed transitions between them. Other habitats present on the site include small patches of wet heath, soligenous flush and bracken which add to the ecological and structural diversity of the site.

The presence of large populations of two notable vascular plants, viper-s-grass *Scorzonera humilis* and marsh fern *Thelypteris palustris* is of special interest. The former species, which is frequent in some of the mixed marshy grassland on the site, is rare in Britain. The latter, which is locally frequent in the base-enriched rush-pasture, is the single known population in Glamorgan.

Some other uncommon plant species are also of note. Dyer-s greenweed *Genista tinctoria* is locally abundant in the neutral grassland, while petty whin *Genista anglica* is scattered across the site. Populations of marsh helleborine *Epipactis palustris* and broad-leaved cottongrass *Eriophorum latifolium* occur in the base-rich rush-pasture, and blunt-flowered rush, which typifies this vegetation, is itself uncommon.

A population of the nationally scarce marsh fritillary butterfly is associated with the marshy grassland, in which its larval food plant, devil-s-bit scabious, is frequent and widespread. Caeau Cefn Cribwr supports the core of a marsh fritillary metapopulation which may also use outlying areas of suitable habitat.

Remarks:

The site supports vegetation assignable to the *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils *Molinion caeruleae*. This is a habitat type listed on Annex I of the European Community-s Habitats and Species Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna).

The marsh fritillary is included on Annex IIa of the Habitats and Species Directive and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and is a Biodiversity Action Plan species.

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