

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS **CAEAU COED MAWR (COEDMAWR FIELDS)**

Date of Notification: 1990, 1997

National Grid Reference: SO117570/SO121572

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 148
1:10,000 Sheet number: SO15NW

Site Area: 9.6 ha

Description:

This site is of special interest because it is one of the most extensive areas of agriculturally unimproved grassland remaining in the area. Several uncommon plant communities are present and the overall species diversity of the site is exceptional. The river is also of special interest as it supports important populations of otters *Lutra lutra*. Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar* and Atlantic stream crayfish *Austropotomobius pallipes*.

This site is in two parts - a series of fields lying on either side of the River Edw at Bettws and an area of pastureland to the north-east. The north-eastern area comprises two damp, north-westerly sloping fields. At the top of the slope a spring-line supports a narrow band of alder *Alnus Glutinosa* woodland with small glades. The majority of this area supports an unusual type of damp grassland characterised by abundant mat grass *Nardus stricta*, frequent bents *Agrostis* spp., sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, and a wide range of other species, such as quaking grass *Briza media*, sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*, tawny sedge *C. hostiana*, carnation sedge *C. panicea*, flea sedge *C. pulicaris* and common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*. Towards the foot of the slope purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* becomes prominent in the sward. Meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* is locally frequent and is accompanied by species such as common yellow-sedge *Carex demissa*, sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus* and marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica*. Where conditions are more acidic, the purple moor-grass is accompanied by species such as star sedge *Carex echinata*, common sedge *C. nigra*, heath wood-rush *Luzula multiflora* and lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*. Wetter hollows are dominated by sharp-flowered rush, along with species such as velvet bent *Agrostis canina*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, common marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*, greater bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus uliginosus*, lesser spearwort *Ranunculus flammula* and the moss *Calliargon cuspidatum*. Stands of similar vegetation also occur elsewhere in the wetter parts of the site. Rushy hollows in the hay-field support additional wet meadow plants, including meadow fescue *Festuca pratensis*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and ragged-robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*.

The remainder of the site comprises mainly neutral grassland subjected to differing management regimes. A sloping hayfield below Coedmawr Farm is largely dominated by common bent *Agrostis Capillaris*, sweet vernal-grass, crested dog's-tail, red fescue *Festuca Rubra* and Yorkshire-fog, with frequent common bird's-foot-trefoil, ribwort plantain *Plantago Lanceolata*, common sorrel *Rumex Acetosa*, clovers *Trifolium spp.*, and a number of other characteristic associates such as common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* meadow vetchling *Lathyrus Pratensis*, oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum Vulgare*, meadow buttercup *Ranunculus Acris* and great burnet *Sanguisorba Officinalis*. Sharp-flowered rush is locally prominent in the damper parts of the field.

A wet hollow at the southern end of the meadow is dominated by lesser pond-sedge *Carex Acutiformis*, with few associates apart from wild angelica *Angelica Sylvestris*, marsh-marigold and the locally uncommon wood club-rush *Scirpus Sylvaticus*. The valley bottom comprises river-side alder woodland and pasture, supporting a grassland community similar to that found in the hay meadow. Several low growing species such as bugle *Ajuga reptans*, daisy *Bellis Perennis* and adder's tongue *Ophioglossum Vulgatum* are also present here. Dry banks nearby support a closely related type of grassy sward with frequent common knapweed, tormentil and devil's-bit scabious and a range of other characteristic species such as heath-grass, glaucous sedge, pignut *Conopodium Majus*, dyer's greenweed *Genista Tinctoria*, bitter-vetch *Lathyrus montanus*, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and betony *Stachys officinalis*.

The site contains a short stretch of the River Edw shaded by alder *Alnus glutinosa*. The river is shallow at this point and supports a flora typical of a small oceanic river with mesotrophic water chemistry that includes frequent hemlock water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata*, reed canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea* and the mosses *Brachythecium plumosum*, *B.rivulare*, *Fontinalis antipyretica* and *Rhyncostegium ripariodes*. At this point the Edw supports good populations of otter, spawning Atlantic salmon and Atlantic stream crayfish, a species that has declined in the UK and is now specially protected. The River Wye and its tributaries, including the River Edw, is a nationally important site for these species.

Remarks:

The site supports the following species covered by EC Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild flora and fauna.

Common otter
Atlantic salmon
Atlantic stream crayfish

Otter and Atlantic stream crayfish are also listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended.

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