

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

POWYS

CORS Y LLYN

Date of Notification: 1970, 1983, 1995

National Grid Reference: SO 016552

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 147
1:25,000 Sheet number: SO 05/15

Site Area: 24.97 ha

Description:

Cors y Llyn is situated in the upper Wye valley about 6km north-west of Builth Wells. It is a nationally important example of a basin mire (formed in a glacial depression) and is of both biological and geological interest.

Geological:

The site provides the most detailed record of Flandrian vegetation and environmental changes in central Wales. The basin contains Late Devensian lake sediments overlain by Flandrian organic detritus muds which were replaced by swamp and carr vegetation on the north and west side. The south-east part of the basin continued as a lake until about 200 years ago when it was colonised by a floating raft of vegetation. Cors y Llyn is one of the finest examples of this type of "Schwingmoor" in Britain. The pollen record reveals very clearly the elm decline and provides the first evidence of cereal cultivation in early Neolithic times in central Wales.

Biological:

There are two main basins separated by a drier ridge which supports some large Scot's pine *Pinus sylvestris*. Both basins support areas that are characterised by a mosaic of hollows and hummocks. The hollows support an abundance of bog-mosses *Sphagnum* spp., particularly *Sphagnum recurvum*, with frequent common cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and occasional heather *Calluna vulgaris*, round-leaved sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* and the liverwort *Cephalozia connivens*. Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccus* is locally abundant, and the locally uncommon white beak-sedge *Rhynchospora alba* occurs in some parts of the southern basin. Stunted Scot's pines occur in the southern basin, but do not form a canopy.

The hummocks support tall clumps of heather with frequent cross-leaved heath, hare's-tail cottongrass *Eriophorum vaginatum* and a range of other associates, including cranberry, crowberry *Empetrum nigrum*, the lichen *Cladonia portentosa*, the moss *Pleurozium schreberi*, the bog-mosses *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *S. papillosum* and the liverworts *Calypogeia muelleriana*, *Mylia anomala* and *Odontoschisma sphagni*. The northern basin contains flooded peat workings which are characterised locally by bottle-sedge *Carex rostrata* and bog-

mosses, with associates such as common cottongrass, bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* and marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*.

The peripheral "lagg zone" around the basins comprises woodland dominated by downy birch *Betula pubescens* or, in places, by naturalised Scot's pine, along with frequent rusty willow *Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia* and occasional alder *Alnus glutinosa*, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and sessile oak *Quercus petraea*. The ground flora on the drier ground is characterised by frequent broad-buckler fern *Dryopteris dilatata*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* and ivy *Hedera helix*. The wetter ground supports carpets of bog-mosses, such as *Sphagnum recurvum*, *S. palustre* and *S. fimbriatum* with a range of associates, including bogbean, marsh cinquefoil and bottle sedge and, in places, the locally uncommon royal fern *Osmunda regalis*. Soft-rush *Juncus effusus* is locally prominent where more base-rich water drains into the mire. The rare epiphytic lichen *Cetraria sepincola* occurs on some of the birches.

Beyond the lagg woodland there are some fragments of what was formerly a more extensive belt of wet pasture and dry acidic grassland. The small meadow at the northern end of the mire has a mosaic of damp hollows, with abundant purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* and meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*, with frequent tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, heath spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, carnation sedge *Carex panicea*, and petty whin *Genista anglica*. It also has drier ground with abundant common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and a wide range of associated herbs including tormentil, devil's-bit scabious, red clover *Trifolium pratense*, common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and the locally uncommon dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria*.

An area of pasture on the south-eastern fringe of the mire supports dry acidic grassland with some wetter hollows characterised by species such as purple moor-grass, tormentil, carnation sedge, velvet bent *Agrostis canina*, marsh violet *Viola palustris*, petty whin, lesser skullcap *Scutellaria minor*, lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, the bog-mosses *Sphagnum auriculatum* and *S. papillosum* and the moss *Aulacomnium palustre*.

Additional interest is provided by some small fields on the western side of the mire which are surrounded by tall hedges - they support further areas of dry acidic and marshy grassland along with bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and rusty willow scrub. This area supports a good range of butterflies, including small pearl-bordered and silver-washed fritillaries *Boloria selene* and *Argynnis paphia*.

The site has a wide variety of invertebrates, including some nationally scarce species such as the fen soldier beetle *Cantharis thoracica* and the spiders *Pirata piscatorius* and *Satilatlas britteni*. The pond to the north of the mire supports a range of dragonflies, including the common hawkmer *Aeshna juncea* and common darter *Sympetrum striolatum*, and all three British newt species.

Remarks:

This entire site is a National Nature Reserve partly owned by the Countryside Council for Wales.

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