

EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds:  
Proposed Special Protection Area

BERWYN (DENBIGHSHIRE, WREXHAM, GWYNEDD & POWYS): CITATION

Berwyn holds the most important upland breeding bird assemblage in Wales including the largest populations of hen harrier Circus cyaneus and merlin Falco columbarius. This is largely because it contains the finest areas of contiguous blanket mire and upland heath habitats in Wales.

Berwyn is a long spine of upland in North Wales running north-east from Mallwyd for over forty kilometres to just south of Llangollen. The topography is characterised by gently contoured ridges and spurs rising to 827m at Cadair Berwyn. The site extends to 24,540ha and the two principal habitats are blanket mire and dwarf-shrub heath. The blanket mire, which occurs on the flatter areas of upland, holds varied communities of which some are characteristic of western Britain and others of Central Europe. Dominant species include heather Calluna vulgaris, hare's tail cottongrass Eriophorum vaginatum, and bog mosses Sphagnum spp. Dwarf shrub heath dominated by heather and bilberry Vaccinium myrtillus is prevalent on the steeper slopes. Acid grasslands, flushes and bracken Pteridium aquilinum - dominated areas also occur. Nationally scarce species include tall bog-sedge Carex magellanica and rock stonecrop Sedum forsterianum. Colonies of the rare Welsh clearwing moth Synanthedon scoliaeformis are also found.

The boundary of the Berwyn proposed Special Protection Area is identical to that of the Berwyn revised Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive by supporting nationally important breeding populations of four Annex 1 species: 2-3 pairs of red kite Milvus milvus (over 1 % of the British population); 14 pairs of hen harrier (over 2% of the British population); 14 pairs of merlin (over 2% of the British population); and 18 pairs of peregrine Falco peregrinus (1.5% of the British population). Notable also are two other Annex 1 species: about 5 pairs of golden plover Pluvialis apricaria and up to 10 pairs of short-eared owl Asio flammeus, both of which are on the southern and western edge of their breeding range in Britain.

The site also supports a large and economically important population of red grouse Lagopus lagopus and important numbers of black grouse Tetrao tetrix. Present also are breeding curlew Numenius arquata, dunlin Calidris alpina, raven Corvus corax, ring ouzel Turdus torquatus, snipe Gallinago gallinago and teal Anas crecca.

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