

EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds:
Special Protection Area
ELENYDD-MALLAEN (POWYS & DYFED)

Elenydd-Mallaen has, until recently, provided the last refuge for the red kite Milvus milvus in Britain and the long association with pastoral agriculture, principally sheep rearing, has created an important carrion-feeding bird community. The breeding density of raven Corvus corax is the highest recorded in Europe and the density of buzzard Buteo buteo is also high.

Elenydd-Mallaen is one of the most ornithologically important areas of hill land in Wales and is dominated by blocks of upland rising to 645m separated by steep-sided valleys. The higher ground has heath and blanket mire, characterised by heather Calluna vulgaris and hare's-tail cottongrass Eriophorum vaginatum or deergrass Trichophorum cespitosum. Much of the area is dominated by mat-grass Nardus stricta, heath rush Juncus squarrosus or purple moor-grass Molinia caerulea. Actively growing pool and hummock mire is found at Cors Lwyd and at Gors Goch. Craggs with interesting plant communities are frequent. These areas, together with some of the hillside and streamside flushes support rare plant species.

Many of the valley sides are clothed with sessile-oak Quercus petraea woodland, which in places have a rich bryophyte and lichen flora. Occasional ash Fraxinus excelsior, alder Alnus glutinosa, elm Ulmus glabra, birch Betula pubescens and rowan Sorbus aucuparia add to the variety of the woodlands. Fast-flowing rivers run down the valleys creating gorges which, together with the many crags and scree slopes, support bryophyte communities confined to the Western Atlantic seaboard. Some of the valley floor grasslands support herb-rich communities.

The Elenydd-Mallaen proposed Special Protection Area comprises land within the following SSSI; Cwm Doethie-Mynydd Mallaen, Elenydd, Vicarage Meadows, Rhosydd Llanwrthwl, Caeau Cnwch a Ty'n-y-graig, Cwm Gwynllyn, Gweunydd Ty'n-y-llidiart, Coedydd Glannau a Cwm Coel, Rhos-yr-hafod, Coed-yr-allt-goch, Caeau Troed-rhiw-drain, Cerrig Gwalch, Carn Gafallt, Marcheini Uplands, Gilfach Farm and Gamallt, and Llynoedd Ieuan.

The site qualifies under Article 4.1 by supporting internationally or nationally important breeding populations of 2 Annex 1 species: 34 pairs of red kite, (34% of the British population and 0.3% of the world population) and about 7 pairs of merlin Falco columbarius (over 1% of the British population). Notable also are the following 3 Annex 1 species: 1, sometimes 2, pairs of chough Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax, part of a small inland population that breed in dis-used lead mines and quarries, over 10 pairs of peregrine Falco peregrinus (nearly 1% of the British population) and about 50 pairs of golden plover Pluvialis apricaria which are on the southern and western edge of their breeding range in Britain.

The site also supports over 50 pairs of breeding raven (about 2% of the British population). Present also are small numbers of breeding teal Anas crecca, red grouse Lagopus lagopus, dunlin Calidris alpina, snipe Gallinago gallinago, curlew Numenius arquata and ring ouzel Turdus torquatus. Black-headed gull colonies occur on some of the upland pools. Breeding species along the rivers include goosander Mergus merganser, common sandpiper Tringa hypoleucos, grey wagtail Motacilla cinerea and dipper Cinclus cinclus.

SPA Citation

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