

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

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

GWYNEDD

CORS GEIRCH

Date of Notification: 1957, 1982, 1984, 1988, 1994, 2002

National Grid Reference: SH315363

OS Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 123
1:10,000 Sheet number: SH23 NE & 33 NW & SW

Site Area: 224.9 ha

Description:

Cors Geirch is a biological site, selected for its nationally important valley mire communities, and is situated within the central part of the valley which runs between Nefyn and Pwllheli on Pen Llŷn. This complex site supports nationally rare plants and invertebrate species. It comprises two distinct wetland areas which are hydrologically linked by a narrow area of rush pasture which also includes remnant fen vegetation. This site supports some of the best of the few examples of rich fen in North Wales outside eastern Anglesey.

Cors Geirch is thought to occupy the site of the pro-glacial Lake Bodfaen and the peat body is underlain by impervious Irish Sea Till. The site is situated in a valley formed between ridges of calcareous sands and gravels, deposited by retreating ice-sheets. Rain seeps through these deposits dissolving minerals and then emerges as springs along the sides of the valley where it meets the Irish Sea Till. These springs feed water into Cors Geirch and lead to the base-rich nature of the site.

The rare plant community types present include bottle sedge *Carex rostrata* - brown moss *Calliargon cuspidatum* mire, black bog-rush *Schoenus nigricans* – blunt-flowered rush *Juncus subnodulosus* mire, tufted-sedge *Carex elata* swamp and great fen-sedge *Cladium mariscus* swamp. Associated species include the nationally rare slender cotton grass *Eriophorum gracile*, found here at one of its very few known sites in Wales, and two populations of narrow-leaved marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza traunsteineri*, which grow in the tussocks of the black bog-rush and have been the subject of taxonomic research. Other species of interest include intermediate bladderwort *Utricularia intermedia*, which occurs here in an isolated location at the southern-most end of its range, marsh hawk's-beard *Crepis paludosa*, also at the edge of its range, grass of Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, and good populations of the nationally declining broad-leaved cotton grass *Eriophorum latifolium* and the nationally scarce marsh fern *Thelypteris palustris*. Other species commonly found at this site include purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea*, bog myrtle *Myrica gale*, marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* and numerous sedges including lesser tussock sedge *Carex diandra*, long stalked yellow-sedge *C. viridula* ssp. *brachyrhyncha*, brown sedge *C. disticha*, and slender sedge *C. lasiocarpa*.

The area of rush-pasture which links the two fen areas is predominately semi-improved in character, but with a deep body of underlying peat. Because of this, some remnants of fen vegetation still exist in the ditches here, including black bog-rush and common reed *Phragmites australis*. This area is

particularly important in terms of the hydrology of the two fen areas and includes the watershed between the two catchments. Water feeds from this area into the fens, and its inclusion ensures the protection of the entire hydrological unit, the continuous body of peat and the associated wetland habitat.

Cors Geirch is one of the best examples of this habitat type in mainland Wales for invertebrates and supports several Red Data Book species. There are also three species listed under Annex II of the Habitats Directive present on the site; the marsh fritillary butterfly *Eurodryas aurinia*, and two whorl snails *Vertigo geyeri* and *V. moulinsiana*. Other notable species include the ground beetle *Chlaenius tristis* at its only known site in Britain, the scarce blue-tailed damselfly *Ischnura pumilio*, the small red damselfly *Ceriagrion tenellum*, the narrow-bordered bee-hawk moth *Hemaris tityus*, and the hornet robberfly *Asilus crabroniformis*, at its only known breeding site in Caernarfonshire. In addition, Cors Geirch supports a large number of nationally and locally uncommon invertebrate species.

Remarks:

This site supports vegetation assignable to Alkaline fens, and Calcareous fens with saw sedge. These are habitat types listed on Annex 1 of the EC Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora & Fauna). Geyer's whorl snail, Desmoulin's whorl snail, and the marsh fritillary are included on Annex 2a of the Habitats Directive.

Cors Geirch forms part of the Corsydd Llŷn Special Area of Conservation.

Cors Geirch is part of the Corsydd Môn a Llŷn Ramsar wetland site.

Purple moor-grass and rush (*Molinia & Juncus*) pasture, wet woodland and Fen are Biodiversity Action Plan habitats.

The marsh fritillary, geyer's whorl snail, and desmoulin's whorl snail, the hornet robberfly, the narrow-bordered bee-hawk moth, water voles *Arvicola terrestris*, the song thrush *Turdus philomelos* and the skylark *Alauda arvensis* are Biodiversity Action Plan species present at Cors Geirch.

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