

**ALLT Y GAER  
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST**



**YOUR SPECIAL SITE AND ITS FUTURE**

‘Your Special Site and its Future’ is part of our commitment to improve the way we work with SSSI owners and occupiers. In it, we try to explain what is special about the wildlife on your site, and what care is needed to look after its wildlife into the future.

All SSSIs are considered to be of national importance and we recognise the crucial role that owners and occupiers play in their management and protection. We will look to your views and knowledge to help safeguard this important site.

We hope that you will find ‘Your Special Site and its Future’ interesting and helpful. Please contact us if there is anything about the site and its management that you would like to discuss.

## **What is ‘special’ about the wildlife at Allt y Gaer SSSI?**

Allt y Gaer is important for its **colony of herons**. There are between 10 and 20 heronries in Carmarthenshire of which Allt y Gaer is the largest, supporting up to 40 pairs of birds.

As well as the herons, Allt y Gaer has habitats that contribute to the wildlife interest of the area. The conifer plantation is mature and the original diverse ground flora has been lost completely. Instead, there is a deep litter layer of shed conifer branches and needles, which is important for a very specialised fungal community plus a few invertebrate species, which feed on the fungi. Fungal species include Spotted Tough Shank, Plums and Custard and Clouded Agaric. Unless it is specified below, management of the site should aim to look after these habitats and species as well as the heronry.

## **What do we want Allt y Gaer SSSI to look like?**

The following is a description of how we would like to see the heronry and associated habitat at Allt y Gaer.

*The habitat is a dense monoculture of conifer trees that completely occupy the site. The heronry fluctuates in numbers from year to year but a minimum number of c. 40 nesting birds would be suitable to maintain a sustainable population of birds at the site. Herons principally feed on amphibia and fish. Within the Tywi Valley these food sources are plentiful in the numerous ponds, backwaters, meanders and the main river.*

## **What management is needed on Allt y Gaer SSSI and why?**

Allt y Gaer is an excellent place for wildlife and little active management is needed on the site. However, some management is required, and CCW’s priority is to work with you to achieve this. We place a great importance on our relationships with owners and occupiers, because without your help, it will be impossible for us to safeguard the special features on your land.

## **What does this mean in practice?**

Herons choose habitats where there are plenty of nesting places, a plentiful supply of food and little disturbance. Positive management of the site would include thinning the woodland outside the breeding season to safeguard the plantation from windblow and increase the number of mature/over mature trees available for nesting.

Nesting - Within the Tywi Valley there is a plentiful supply of suitable nesting site available to aid the expansion of the colony.

Disturbance - The birds do not like to be disturbed and care should be taken to minimise disturbance especially during the breeding season (February –June).

Fertilisers and Pesticides – An important food source for herons are fish, but frogs and other small mammals are also favoured food. These animals are in turn vulnerable to

fertilisers, pesticides and other chemicals. Care should be taken to avoid the use of chemicals and both natural and chemical fertilisers on or near the site.

Available food supply – Because of the reliance of herons on frogs and other amphibia as a main food source, it is necessary that as many standing water areas (like ponds and ditches) are retained within the Tywi Valley.

### **Finally**

Our knowledge and understanding of wildlife is continually improving. It is possible that new issues may arise in the future, whilst other issues may disappear. This statement is written with the best information we have now, but may have to change in the future as our understanding improves. Any information you can provide on the wildlife of your site and its conservation would be much appreciated.

**If you would like to discuss any aspect of your SSSI, or have any concerns about your SSSI, please contact your local CCW office.**

**Your local office is;  
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