

## CARMARTHENSHIRE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

### PURPLE MOOR-GRASS AND RUSH PASTURE



### What are purple moor grass and rush pastures?

Purple moor grass and rush pastures (rhôs pastures) are damp grasslands, which occur on poorly drained, usually acidic soils throughout the lowlands and upland fringes of western Britain. They have a restricted distribution characterised by areas of high rainfall. This important habitat has suffered considerable losses in recent times.

These pastures can be full of wildlife, including a variety of grasses, sedges, rushes and flowering plants such as whorled caraway, meadow thistle, ragged robin, devil's-bit scabious and orchids. Often heather can be found growing amongst the tussocky grassland.

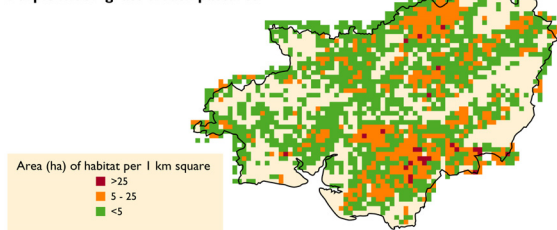
Birds such as the skylark, curlew and reed bunting use the grassland for nesting and feeding, and frogs, toads, lizards and small mammals all live here. Otters may visit rhôs pastures to hunt frogs and toads.

A variety of insects use rhôs pasture, including the uncommon and declining marsh fritillary butterfly, now one of the most rapidly declining butterflies in Europe.

### Where is it found in Carmarthenshire

In Wales Carmarthenshire is one of the most important areas for rhôs pasture, holding about 20% of the Welsh total, concentrated in the coalfield area. Here less intensive farming practices and small field systems still exist, allowing the habitat to survive, as the land has not been 'improved'. There are scattered examples of this habitat elsewhere in the county.

Purple moor-grass & rush pastures



Distribution of 1 km squares with lowland purple moor-grass & rush pastures within Carmarthenshire. Data are summarised from the NCC/CCW Lowland Habitat Survey of Wales (1987-1997) and comprise lowland marshy grassland and half the cover of lowland wet grass/heath mosaic.

### Conservation objectives

- \* Stop the decline of purple moor grass and rush pasture.
- \* Secure the favourable management of all significant areas of the habitat within SSSIs.
- \* Where feasible, restore areas of the habitat through agri-environment schemes.

### What you can do to help:

- \* If you own this habitat – seek advice on management.

### Further information:

[www.ccw.gov.uk](http://www.ccw.gov.uk)

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### Why is it in decline?

- \* Agricultural intensification, including drainage, reseeded, fertiliser application and cultivation.
- \* Inappropriate or lack of management, including overgrazing by sheep or undergrazing and ultimately scrub invasion.
- \* Residential and/or industrial development, as well as road schemes.
- \* Opencast coaling has also destroyed a number of sites.

### What is being done locally

- \* Habitat restoration through Tir Gofal agri-environment schemes.
- \* 21 Carmarthenshire SSSIs have rhôs pasture habitat within them – some with management agreements in operation.

### Where you can see this habitat

Mynydd Mawr area of Carmarthenshire.



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