

CARMARTHENSHIRE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

SALTMARSH



What is saltmarsh?

Found mostly in sheltered estuaries where sediment can accumulate, saltmarshes are the upper, vegetated parts of mudflats that are exposed between the tides.

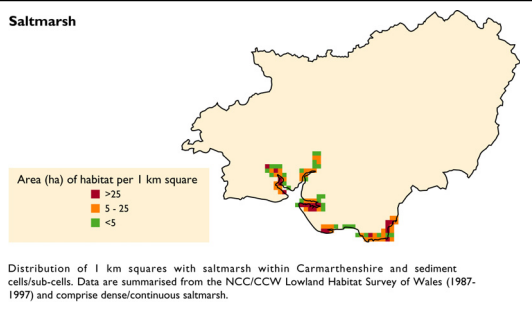
The specialist plants that grow in saltmarshes are adapted to regular immersion by the salty tides (halophytic plants). Different plants can tolerate different amounts of salt water so the saltmarsh is divided into 'zones'.

Saltmarshes provide important high-tide roosting areas for wading birds and wildfowl that feed on adjacent mudflats. They also provide breeding sites for birds and provide winter feeding grounds for large flocks of wild duck and geese. Saltmarsh can support a number of uncommon invertebrate species and also provide sheltered nursery sites for several species of fish.

Saltmarshes are capable of dispersing the energy of the waves and can therefore help greatly in protecting the coastline.

Distribution in Carmarthenshire

The Burry Inlet has the second largest continuous area of saltmarsh in the UK and the Tywi, Taf and Gwendraeth estuaries all have significant areas. Being of international importance, they are included in the 'Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries' Special Area of Conservation (SAC).



Conservation objectives

- * Ensure there is no net loss of saltmarsh habitat in Carmarthenshire due to human factors.
- * Maintain and enhance the quality of saltmarsh through appropriate management.
- * Seek opportunities to create additional areas of saltmarsh vegetation.

What you can do to help:

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

Further information:

www.ccw.org.uk
www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk

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What are the threats?

- * Land reclamation for industrial/agricultural development.
- * Erosion and deposition – both can affect saltmarsh sites.
- * Coastal defence works can affect local sediment accumulation.
- * Over or under grazing can effect the structure and composition of saltmarsh vegetation and invertebrate species
- * Agricultural improvement has affected the upper parts of some saltmarshes. Run-off of fertilizer or sewage can also lead to unwanted algal growth.
- * Spread of the invasive cord-grass *Spartina anglica*.
- * Pollution, fly tipping and military use. Some sites have also been drowned through barrage construction.

What is being done locally

- * A Shoreline Management Plan recognises the value of Carmarthenshire's saltmarsh, as well as their potential role in coastal defence.
- * Surveys of the habitat in the county have been carried out.
- * Saltmarshes are grazed to produce a diversity of vegetation structure.

Where you can see this habitat

Good examples can be seen at the National Wetlands Centre, Wales, at Penclacwydd and from the Millennium Coastal Park.