

CARMARTHENSHIRE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

UPLAND OAKWOODS



What is an upland oakwood?

Upland oakwoods occur in high rainfall areas in the west and north of Britain, mostly on acidic soils and generally in more upland areas. British upland oak woodlands are of international importance for their extent and distinctive plant and animal communities. It is the most common type of woodland in Wales and forms some of our ancient woods.

Dominated by oak (usually sessile oak but sometimes pedunculate oak), downy birch and rowan also usually occur. Underneath the canopy a mix of hazel and holly may grow. Upland oakwoods can be rich in mosses, ferns and lichens, which may form luxuriant carpets on the ground and clothe boulders and tree trunks. Otherwise the ground flora varies with the type of soil and amount of grazing. Bluebells, wood anemone and wood sorrel can form colourful displays in the spring on richer soils whilst heather and bilberry grow on poorer ones.

These woods are important for summer migrants: redstarts, pied flycatchers and wood warblers all breed here and red kites favour these woods to build their nests.

Many upland oakwoods were intensively managed for charcoal until the late 1800s and many were felled in the two World Wars. They have declined by 30–40% in extent over the last 50–60 years, largely as a result of re-planting with non-native conifers and clearance for agriculture.

Distribution in Carmarthenshire

Carmarthenshire has 15–18% of this habitat in Wales and 3 SSSIs with oakwoods. It tends to be most common on steep valley sides in the north of the county.

What are the threats?

- * Overgrazing by stock resulting in a decline of the ground flora and a lack of regeneration.
- * Invasion by species such as rhododendron and beech.
- * Inappropriate forest management, e.g. replanting with conifers.
- * Effects of air pollution, especially on lichens and mosses.

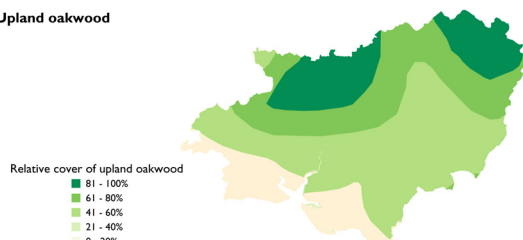
What is being done locally

- * Woodland grants and agri-environment agreements operate on sites with upland oakwoods.
- * Ecological surveys of upland oakwoods have been undertaken.
- * Coed Cymru provides free advice on the management of broad-leaved woodland including upland oak woods.
- * Management and restoration of upland oakwoods is being undertaken at numerous Forestry Commission holdings.

Where you can see this habitat

Allt Rhydygroes National Nature Reserve and RSPB Dinas Reserve near Rhandirmwyn.

Upland oakwood



Estimated relative cover of upland oakwood as a proportion of native woodland extent within Carmarthenshire. Relative cover is expressed according to five classes indicated by different degrees of shading

Conservation objectives

- * Maintain the current extent of upland oak wood and improve its condition.
- * Encourage the appropriate restoration of former upland oak woods planted with non-native species.
- * Encourage, on suitable sites, the expansion of upland oakwood

What you can do to help:

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

Further information:

www.coedcymru.org.uk
www.forestry.gov.uk

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