

Wales Grassland and Heathland Ecosystem Group Priority Action

Gower Coast Limestone Grasslands and Heathlands

Carboniferous limestone dominates the scenery of south Gower with its indented, eroding coast, steeply sloping cliffs, wave-cut platforms, headlands, caves, sandy bays and coves running from Worm's head to Mumbles.

This section of coastline represents one of the most extensive exposures of the South Wales Coalfield outcrop with steep cliffs of Carboniferous Limestone rising 70 metres above sea level. The site is noted for the range of habitats it supports which includes exposed maritime grasslands and sea cliffs, calcareous grasslands, maritime-influenced limestone heath on skeletal soils, acid heath on deeper drift soils and, within the more sheltered valleys, hazel and blackthorn scrub. The area forms part of an Important Plant Area. In addition, features of national geological and physiographic interest occur, as well as regionally important seabird nesting sites.

The favourable climate and variety of coastal habitats along the south coast of the Gower combine to produce ideal conditions for a rich invertebrate fauna. The assemblage of coastal invertebrates contains several species that are nationally rare as well as many others that are extremely scarce in Wales.

The condition of grassland and heathland vegetation along this stretch of coast varies with some areas being well-grazed, supporting short flower-rich calcareous grassland and heath, whilst other areas are dominated by rank grass, woody gorse and bracken. Parts of the coast suffer from repeated burning which encourages the growth of bracken and gorse and in the long-term damages the more species-rich grasslands and heaths. Establishing appropriate grazing levels and patterns of grazing is essential to improve habitat quality. Additional work such as scrub clearance and rotational management of heath will also be required; however management needs to be identified at a landscape level to ensure the full range of habitats including scrub are maintained where appropriate.

Action required includes:

1. Investigate current grazing levels and future requirements
2. Improve infrastructure to allow better management of stock
3. Establishment of grazing appropriate to the requirements of both the habitats and associated species
4. Scrub and bracken management
5. Heather and gorse management by burning and/or mowing (where appropriate to habitat, situation and species)
6. Continued integration of coastal access and habitat management to ensure that people's enjoyment of the "wild" nature of this stretch of coast is enhanced without impacting the habitats and species.

Priority Sites

Worms Head to Port Eynon Coast
Horton to Oxwich Coast

Other Key Sites

Penmaen to Mumbles Coast

Species Interest

Key Section 42 species

Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
Pale dog violet	<i>Viola lactea</i>

Other Section 42

Sea Stock	<i>Matthiola sinuata</i>
Basil thyme	<i>Clinopodium acinos</i>
Juniper	<i>Juniperus communis</i>
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Yellow hammer	<i>Emberiza citronella</i>
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>
Slow worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>
Grass snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>
Greater horseshoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>
Brown hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>
Grayling	<i>Hipparchia semele</i>

Vascular Plant assemblage

Wild Asparagus	<i>Asparagus prostrates</i> (Sec 42)
Goldilocks aster	<i>Aster linosyris</i>
Yellow whitlow-grass	<i>Draba aizoides</i>
Nit-grass	<i>Gastridium ventricosum</i>
Golden samphire	<i>Inula crithmoides</i>
Sea Lavender	<i>Limonium procerum</i> subsp. <i>procerum</i>
White horehound	<i>Marrubium vulgare</i>
Small restharrow	<i>Ononis reclinata</i>
Spring cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla neumanniana</i>
Spiked speedwell	<i>Veronica spicata</i> subsp. <i>spicata</i>
Hoary rockrose	<i>Helianthemum oelandicum</i>
Ivy broomrape	<i>Orobanche hederæ</i>
Western clover	<i>Trifolium occidentale</i>

Invertebrate assemblage

For more details see separate sheet

Species	Order
<i>Eucera longicornis</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Cathormiocerus maritimus</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Chrysotoxum elegans</i>	Diptera
<i>Hylaeus pictipes</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Andrena labiata</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Nomada fucata</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Platycleis albopunctata</i>	Orthoptera

<i>Sitona waterhousei</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Bombylius discolor</i>	Diptera
<i>Methocha ichneumonides</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Priocnemis gracilis</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Andrena trimmerana</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Lasioglossum puncticolle</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Nomada flavopicta</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Andrena dorsata</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Andrena hattorfiana</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Andrena marginata</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Sphecodes crassus</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Formica cunicularia</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Melitta leporina</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Melecta albifrons</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Philanthus triangulum</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Goniocera versicolor</i>	Diptera
<i>Dicranomyia goritiensis</i>	Diptera
<i>Myopites eximia</i>	Diptera
<i>Myopites inulaedyssentericae</i>	Diptera
<i>Minettia flaviventris</i>	Diptera
<i>Meonura lacteipennis</i>	Diptera
<i>Miltogramma germari</i>	Diptera
<i>Macroplax preysleri</i>	Hemiptera
<i>Coleophora ochrea</i>	Lepidoptera
<i>Agdistis meridionalis</i>	Lepidoptera
<i>Idaea dilutaria</i>	Lepidoptera
<i>Astenus procerus</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Licinus depressus</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Cymindis axillaris</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Amphimallon ochraceus</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Trachyphloeus rectus</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Limobius borealis</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Sibinia sodalis</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Epischnia banksiella</i>	Lepidoptera
<i>Leptothorax tuberum</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Arachnospila wesmaeli</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Andrena tibialis</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Ectobius pallidus</i>	Dictyoptera
<i>Dicranocephalus agilis</i>	Hemiptera
<i>Rhyparochromus pini</i>	Hemiptera
<i>Aepophilus bonnairei</i>	Hemiptera
<i>Harpalus azureus</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Ochthebius lejolisi</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Alaobia scapularis</i>	Coleoptera

<i>Geotrupes vernalis</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Meligethes solidus</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Oncomera femorata</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Cryptocephalus bipunctatus</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Trachyploeus spinimanus</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Polydrusus pulchellus</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Trichosirocalus dawsoni</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Tychius squamulatus</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Sibinia primita</i>	Coleoptera
<i>Bembecia muscaeformis</i>	Lepidoptera
<i>Scotopteryx bipunctaria cretata</i>	Lepidoptera
<i>Asilus crabroniformis</i>	Diptera
<i>Symphoromyia immaculata</i>	Diptera
<i>Bombylius canescens</i>	Diptera
<i>Phthiria pulicaria</i>	Diptera
<i>Chersodromia speculifera</i>	Diptera
<i>Dolichopus signifer</i>	Diptera
<i>Sciapus laetus</i>	Diptera
<i>Eudorylas zermattensis</i>	Diptera
<i>Eumerus sabulonum</i>	Diptera
<i>Homoneura tesquae</i>	Diptera
<i>Scoliocentra confusa</i>	Diptera
<i>Chlorops troglodytes</i>	Diptera
<i>Sarcophila latifrons</i>	Diptera
<i>Podalonia hirsuta</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Andrena ocreata</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Osmia bicolor</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Megachile leachella</i>	Hymenoptera
<i>Trachyzelotes pedestris</i>	Araneae
<i>Dipoena prona</i>	Araneae