

Coed Tranch-yr-Hebog

Biodiversity of the Nant Fawr Trail

This leaflet will help you to identify some of the more common plants, animals and birds along the Nant Fawr Trail. Take a moment to stop, look and listen for wildlife, you will be surprised how much you can find. Click on the 'icons' to find out more...

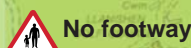
For further information about other opportunities to enjoy the countryside on your doorstep contact the Council's Countryside Team.

Telephone: 029 2087 3215

Email: countryside@cardiff.gov.uk

Websites: www.cardiff.gov.uk/countryside,
www.cardiff.gov.uk/biodiversity

Nant Fawr Trail
Alternative Route



Cefn Onn Park

Coed-y-Felin

Coetgaepengam

Rhyd-y-Pennau

Llandennis Oval

Nant Fawr Meadows

Roath Park

Roath Park

The main attraction of Roath Park is the large lake. It is home to a wildfowl collection and an important habitat for over wintering and breeding birds. The island provides a nesting site safe from land based predators and human disturbance.

Birds attracted to the lake include **Mallard**, **Pochard**, **Cormorants** and **Grey Heron**. The non-native **Canada goose** can also be seen here.

Coots and **Moorhens** breed here. Coots have a white shield on their face while Moorhens have a smaller, red shield.

The lake also attracts gulls including **Black-headed**, **Herring** and **Lesser black-backed**, so it is a good place to learn the difference between these species. They use the lake for bathing after feeding along the coast.

The streams to the north and south are good feeding areas for **Kingfishers** and **Dippers** which can also nest under the bridges.

In the summer this is an excellent place to see a number of bat species. **Pipistrelles** fly all over the lake and through the surrounding trees while **Noctules** can be seen in the early evening flying high in the sky away from their roosts in the park.



Mallard



Pochard



Cormorant



Grey Heron



Canada Geese



Coot



Moorhen



Black-headed



Herring



Lesser black-backed



Kingfisher



Dipper

Main Map

Llandennis Oval

The pond is well known for its **flat-worm** species. These are found underneath stones in ponds and rivers. Their bodies are covered with tiny hairs which constantly move. They secrete slime which acts as a lubricant. If they come across prey which is too big to swallow they cover it with slime and suck off a bit at a time.

Plants in the pond include **Yellow flag iris**, **Water mint** and **Branched bur-reed**. All of these are emergent plants meaning they are based in the water but grow tall out of it. They provide routes out of the water for insects such as **Dragonflies** and **Damselflies**. Like butterflies these go through a metamorphosis. They start life as aquatic larvae, then climb up emerging plants, break out of their skin and appear as the beautiful flying insects you may see whizzing over the pond.

Common Eels have also been recorded here. Although the pond is linked to other water bodies Eels can survive out of water, crossing damp meadows to reach new habitats.



Yellow flag iris



Water mint



Branched bur-reed



Dragonfly



Damselfly

[Main Map](#)

Woods Covert and Rhyd-y-Pennau Wood

In this area, lines of **Oak**, **Beech** and **Alder** trees protect the banks of the Nant Fawr. The land here is boggy, ideal for Alder trees. This is a distinctive plant being the only native deciduous tree to produce seed cases in the form of cones. The branches have a purple tinge which makes the tree colourful in winter. Charcoal made from Alder used to be used in gun powder.

The woodland has examples of ancient woodland species such as **Red current**, **Primrose**, **Wood speedwell**, **Yellow archangel** and **Bluebells**. These plants can be seen in the spring.

Also in spring listen for birds singing. The most obvious is the **Song thrush**. They sing loudly from a high perch and repeat a phrase 3 or 4 times before changing it. Other birds to look out for are **Blackbirds**, **Dunnocks**, **Nuthatches** and **Bullfinches**. **Siskins** are attracted to the Alder cones in the winter, having especially small pointed beaks to break open the seed cones.

In the Autumn look out for fungus such as **Oyster mushrooms**, **Beefsteak fungus** and **Jelly ear fungus**.



Oak



Beech



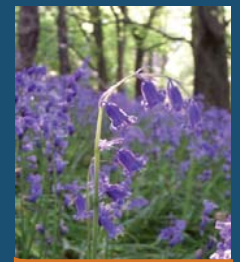
Alder Cones



Primrose



Yellow archangel



Bluebells



Song Thrush



Blackbird



Dunnock



Nuthatcher



Bullfinche



Siskin

Main Map

Nant Fawr Meadows

The grassland here has many interesting plant species. These include **Devil's-bit scabious**, **Common Bird's-foot Trefoil**, **Ox-eye daisy**, **Red and White clover**, and **Ragged robin** in damper areas. This mix of flowers attracts insects. **Bumble bees** come out after hibernating and feed on early flowers. One of the first butterflies of the year is the **Orange tip**. **Common blue** butterflies feed on the Bird's-foot trefoil. **Small copper** butterflies shine in sunlight feeding on the yellow flowers of **Ragwort**.

If you take a good look in the meadow you may discover other interesting species such as **Meadow grasshoppers**, different **hoverflies** and **Four-spotted orb weaver spiders**.

Harvest mice nests have been found in the grassland edges. They are the smallest rodent in the UK at 5-8cm long and weighing less than 11g. The nests are made high above the ground on stems and are tight balls of woven grass about 10cm across.

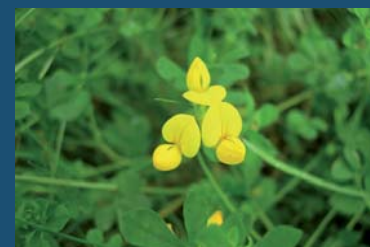
Recently a cluster of ponds have been dug out in the wetter area of the meadow. They have already attracted breeding **Palmate newt**, **Common frog** and **Common toad**. Frogs have smooth skin and vary in colour from grey, olive green and yellow to different shades of brown. They lay their spawn in large clumps. Toads have bumpy, dry skin and copper orange eyes. Their spawn is laid in 2 meter long chains twirled around water plants.

In late spring the toads migrate from their wintering areas towards ancestral breeding ponds along the same routes each year. After hatching and growing from tadpoles the toadlets leave the pond in summer, usually just after rain. In a good year you may see hundreds of tiny toadlets crawling through the meadows looking for somewhere damp to spend the winter.

All of these amphibians and small mammals make the meadows an ideal place for **Grass snakes**. They feed on these and are excellent swimmers so cope well in the damp conditions. Piles of grass cuttings are left at the side of fields so the snakes can lay their eggs in them.



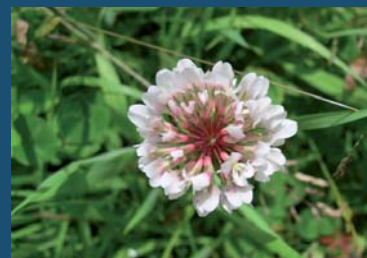
Devil's-bit scabious



Common Bird's-foot Trefoil



Ox-eye daisy



White Clover



Ragged robin



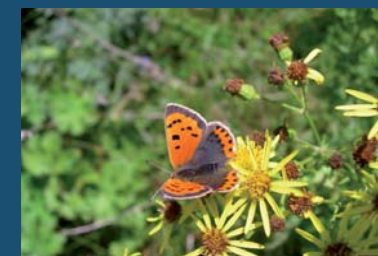
Bumble Bee



Orange tip



Common blue



Small Copper



Harvest mouse nest



Common Frog



Grass Snake

[Main Map](#)

Coetgaepengam

This is a small area of semi-natural oak/ash woodland. In the spring the ground is carpeted with early flowers. These include **Bluebell**, **Pignut**, **Tutsan**, **Gelder rose**, **Red currant**, **Foxglove**, **Dogs mercury**, **Yellow pimpernel**, **Arum** (Lords and Ladies), **Wood anemone** and **Yellow archangel**. This mix of species indicates that this area has been woodland for several hundred years.

Yew trees are also found here. The Yew tree is one of the most ancient trees and some individuals can be thousands of years old. They are evergreen trees with bright red berries. Both the leaves and seeds are highly toxic. Traditionally Yew wood was used for longbows and spears as it is both heavy and elastic.

Grey squirrels can be seen chasing each other through the tree-tops. Birds living in the woods include **Robin**, **Blue tit** and **Mistle thrush**.



Bluebell



Gelder rose



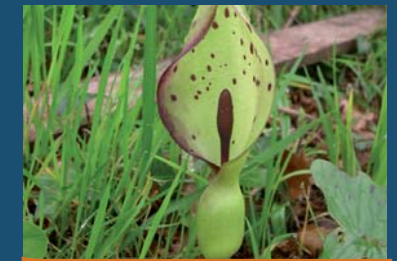
Foxglove



Dogs mercury



Yellow pimpernel



Arum



Wood anemone



Yellow archangel



Grey squirrel



Robin



Blue tit



Mistle thrush

Main Map

Coed-y-Felin

There is a mix of habitats in Coed-y-Felin; Semi-natural Oak/Ash and Beech woodland, a large pond and the Nant Fawr stream.

The woodland has many interesting plant species including **Broadleaved helleborine**, **Moschatel** and **Common valerian**. The woodland is the only place in Cardiff to see **Herb Paris**. This is a short plant (up to 40cm) with an upright stalk with four or five leaves whorled around the top. The leaves themselves are striking, they are plump, matt-green and have deep veining. The flowers are stars of yellow-green which go on to form a single blue-black berry. The best time to see the plant is late May.

In the clearings in the woodland look out for butterflies feeding on flowers. Species seen here include **Comma**, **Peacock**, **Small tortoiseshell**, **Red admiral** and **Speckled wood**.

The stream is home to **Bullheads**. These fish are found in clean, fast-flowing shallow water bodies. They lay eggs in March and April then the male guards them until hatched. They are small (up to 18cm) with a large mouth, prominent eyes and a wide flattened head. Usually mottled brown on top the males turn black with a white-tipped dorsal fin in the breeding season. They spend the days hiding under stones and come out to feed at dusk.



Broadleaved helleborine



Moschatel



Common valerian



Herb Paris



Comma



Peacock



Small tortoiseshell



Red admiral



Speckled wood

Main Map

Parc Cefn Onn

There are a number of different habitats in this formal park. The parkland itself still has typical woodland ground flora such as **Bluebell**, **Primrose**, **Wood anemone**, **Yellow archangel**, **Lesser celandine** and **Tutsan**.

There are several ornamental ponds in the park which are home to **Common frogs** and **Common toads**.

The area known as the Picnic Field is one of the best sites in Cardiff to see **Waxcap** fungi with 17 species recorded there. Waxcaps are attractive fungi, often brightly coloured. They are generally found in ancient and relatively unimproved grasslands such as pastures, meadows, churchyards and parkland. The way the Picnic Field is managed is very important for waxcaps. It is regularly mown and the cuttings removed (like you would on your lawn) and it is never fertilised. Taking the cuttings off the field stops dominant grasses taking over. This is a good way to manage wildflower meadows. The regular mowing creates a very short sward which is perfect for waxcaps.

The best time to look for waxcaps is in the autumn particularly October and November. Interesting species found here include the **Pink meadow waxcap** which is a beautiful pink colour. The **Parrot waxcap** can be identified by the top of the stem being green. Apart from this they can be bright green all over or range through oranges, yellows and even pale blue and purple. The **Blackening waxcap** is very variable in colour but always goes black as it ages or if it is handled.



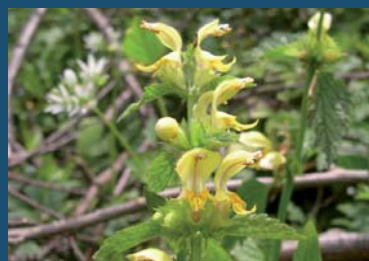
Bluebell



Primrose



Wood anemone



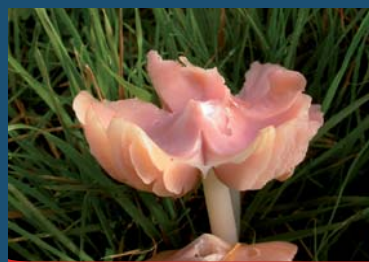
Yellow archangel



Lesser celandine



Waxcap



Pink meadow waxcap



Parrot waxcap



Blackening waxcap

Coed Tranch-yr-Hebog

An **Oak** woodland on the steep side of the Caerphilly ridge. It is like the upland oak woods of North Wales and has species to match. **Badgers** dig out sets in the steep slopes. Listen out for **Wood mice** scuttling around on the floor.

Dormice also live here. They are protected by European law and the population here is monitored by staff with special licences. Dormice sleep for up to three quarters of their life. They eat a variety of food including aphids found in the treetops, flowers and berries. One of the best ways to find out if Dormice are in an area is to look for **Hazel** nuts that have been opened. Dormice make a distinctive hole with chiselled marks on the outside and a smooth inside. They weave nests out of Honeysuckle bark and fresh leaves.

The wood is also good for birds. **Bullfinches** are beautiful but secretive birds that move through the canopy and like to feed off flower buds. **Green woodpeckers** live in the woods and feed on ants in the surrounding fields. They have a very distinctive 'yaffling' call like a laugh. **Tawny owls** also live in the woodland. They are very territorial and in the winter can be heard calling to their mate. The females make a 'kee-wick' sound and the males a 'hoo-hoo-hoo' so together a pair calling to each other sound like the traditional "Twit Twoo"



Oak



Hazel Nuts



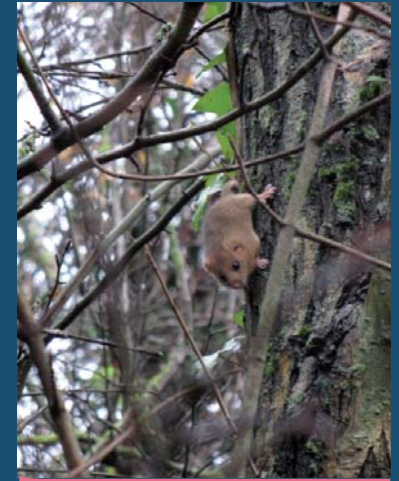
Bullfinch



Green Woodpecker



Wood mouse



Dormouse



Tawny Owl

Main Map