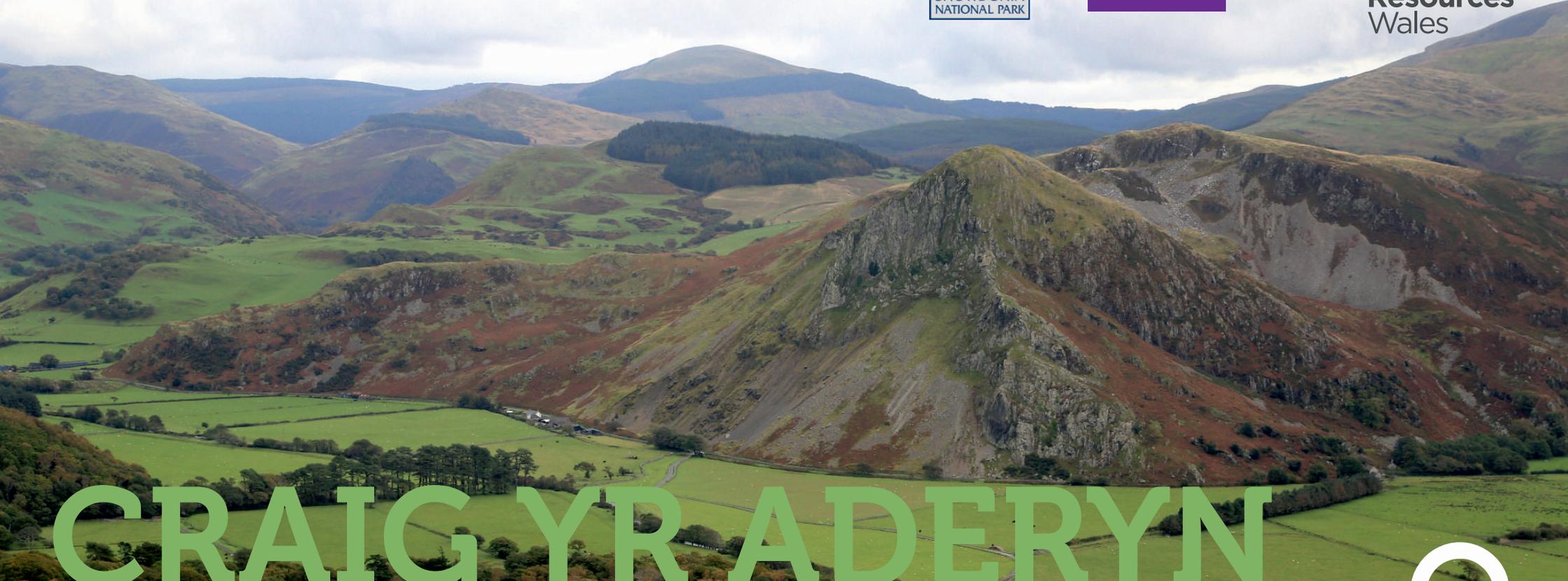


**Cyfoeth  
Naturiol  
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Natural  
Resources  
Wales**



# CRAIG YR ADERYN

Site Guides for Recreation  
Protected Landscapes of Wales



## 2. CRAIG YR ADERYN



## Introduction

The impressive, rocky outcrop, Craig yr Aderyn (Birds' Rock) juts sharply out of the Dysynni valley, rising to a height of 258m. The area lies within the Snowdonia National Park and consists of rocky crags, acid grassland, heath and bracken. Craig yr Aderyn is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Protection Area (SPA). The SPA covers an area of 89.26ha and includes

within its boundaries all the climbing crags, as well as a small area of moorland. As its name suggests, it is renowned for its bird population as an important breeding and roosting site for the red-billed chough which is on the Amber List of UK birds of conservation concern due to its localised breeding distribution in the UK.

## Designation

The European Union have identified the most important sites for wildlife in Europe as the Natura 2000 sites. There are two types of Natura 2000 sites:

**Special Protection Areas (SPAs)** - designated because of rare or migratory birds and their habitats.

**Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)** for a wide range of habitats and species other than birds.

In addition to these international designations there are UK conservation designations:

**Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)** are the most important sites for Wales' natural heritage and are legally designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

**National Nature Reserves (NNRs)** are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, or under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

*See back cover for more information on designations.*

## Craig yr Aderyn summits

Y Palis Mawr and Y Palis Bach - 'the large stockade the small stockade'. A stockade is a defensive structure of tall walls made of logs placed side by side vertically, with the tops sharpened to provide security. Today the summit is still reached via the original entrance to the hill fort.

**Iron age hill fort** The summit is occupied by a small hill fort thought to originate from the Iron Age. The fort wall's line the crest of the hill's lower terraces, and today are covered in turf. Artefacts discovered at the site include Roman pottery and a curved lead bar, possibly an armet.

## Craig yr Aderyn

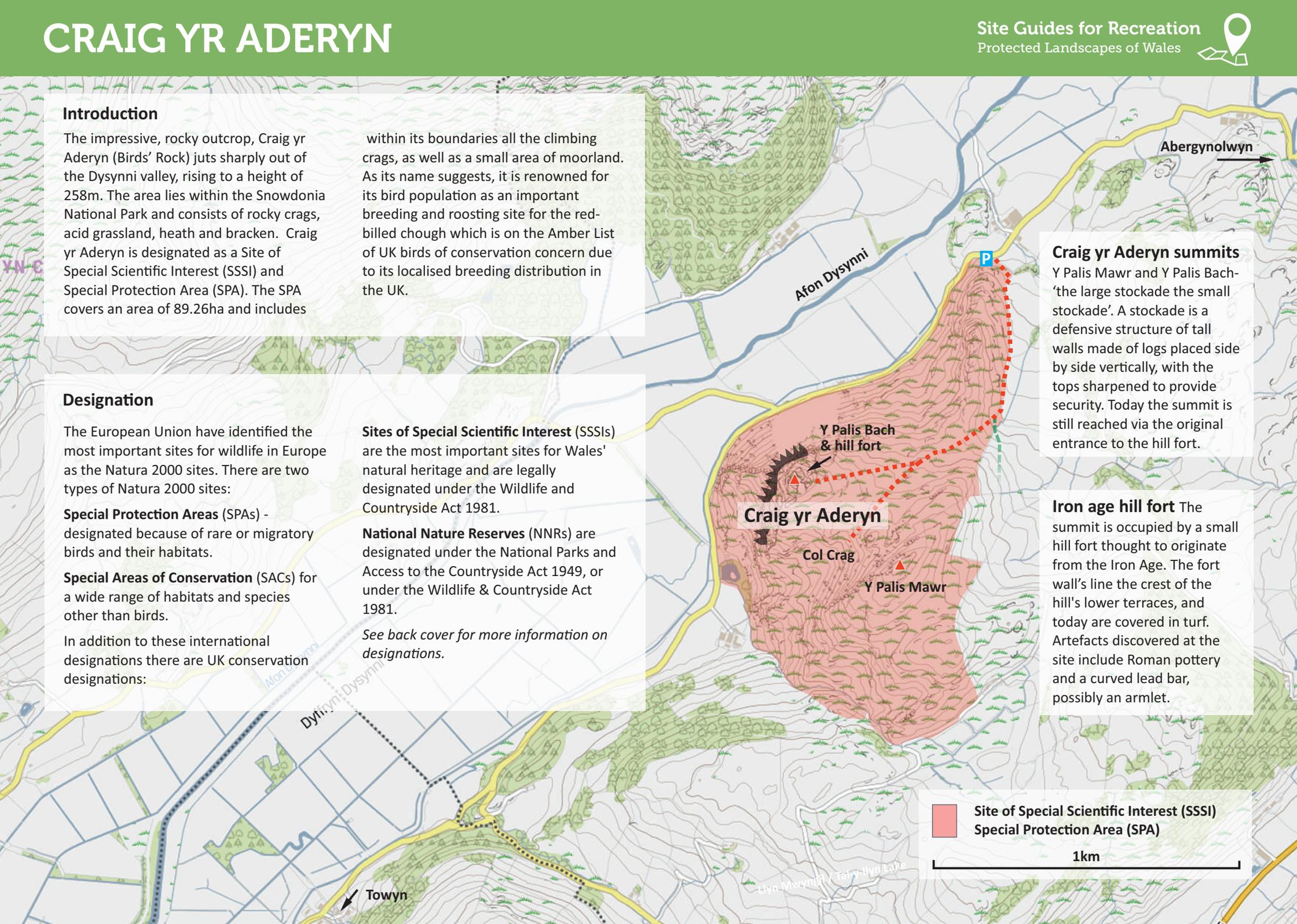
Y Palis Bach & hill fort

Col Crag

Y Palis Mawr

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)  
Special Protection Area (SPA)

1km





**Dysynni drainage** Up until the 18th century the Dysynni estuary would have come up very close to the foot of Craig yr Aderyn but the natural extension of the shingle spit on the coast caused the river to silt up, until it was no longer navigable at high tide. Since the 1700s the valley has been extensively drained to create miles of flat fertile farm land. More recently a local drainage scheme focused on strengthening the banks and straightening the river's course- still one of the most highly mechanised drainage projects ever undertaken in Wales to date.

**Land management** The majority of Craig yr Aderyn is open access land used for sheep farming. Sheep numbers and bracken control are managed carefully to ensure the grass is kept to a short sward to provide foraging habitat for cough.

**Norsemen** Tywyn was attacked and burned by marauding Norsemen in 963AD. As the enemy approached a warning beacon would be lit on the coast and the residents of Tywyn would flee to the safety of Craig yr Aderyn.

**Craig yr Aderyn quarry** Up until the late 1980s the hill was quarried for road stone on its north side. To prevent further degradation the Snowdonia National Park Authority acquired this small area to protect it and allow it to regenerate.



**Oak fern** grows in the cool, damp rocky crevices of Craig yr Aderyn. Whilst tricky to find it can be identified in dark places by its bright green colour and small oak-shaped fronds.



**Bracken** Originally a woodland plant, bracken *rhedyn* in Welsh, spreads prolifically across much of the Welsh uplands through under-ground rhizome (dense root stalks), making it difficult to control. Grazing cattle have been found to limit its growth by trampling it flat, preventing further spread.

**Goats** In the early 1960s a herd of feral goats were introduced from the Rhinogydd to graze the narrow, precipitous ledges of the cliff face to prevent sheep from becoming stuck. One by one the goats vanished, some say they ate their way through local gardens back to their beloved Rhinogydd!





Eastern Face

Col Crag

Central  
Buttress

The Bastion

West Face

**Craig yr Aderyn** (Birds' Rock) takes its name from the abundance of bird life seen on and around its crags. Wheatears, stonechats and linnets are common; Ravens, kestrels and red kites often fly here and both the barn owl and little owl have bred in the gullies and ledges of the cliff face.

**Climbing** There are four principal crags used for rock climbing; the Eastern Face, the Central Buttress, The Bastion and the Col Crag. The Eastern Face has the longest routes, however these are all subject to a seasonal restriction and are heavily vegetated. The Central Buttress, which has an upper and lower tier, and is also subject to the restriction. The Bastion, framed by its impressive 'Diamond Face', is the most popular part of the rock, and contains a mixture of single and multi-pitch routes, none of which are subject to any kind of restriction.

# CRAIG YR ADERYN

**Group climbing** The Col Crag, located on the saddle between the 2 highest peaks is a popular venue for single pitch climbing with groups. About 30 feet high, with 2 worthwhile routes, the crag sits in the 'bowl' of a meadow, creating a comfortable spot for the waiting group. For more information on crag etiquette follow the Green Guide for Climbers on the back cover.

**Seasonal restriction** Runs from the 1st March to the 31st July. This is to protect nesting choughs, peregrines and cormorants. Climbers are also asked to avoid climbing here near to dusk to avoid disturbing roosting chough.



## HISTORIC LANDSCAPE



**Geology** The Tal y Llyn valley lies on the Bala Fault line, a major geological feature in Wales formed 800 million years ago. Volcanic magma rose up through this fracture, creating Cadair Idris nearby. Craig yr Aderyn itself is predominantly volcanic, the rock being known as 'rhyolitic tuff' created from ash deposited after the eruption. During the last ice age 12,000 years ago, a glacier carved its way down the Dysynni valley creating the classic steep sided U-shape. Evidences of glacial deposition and action have created the landforms seen today.

**River Capture** The upper course of the Afon Dysynni starts in the Tal y Llyn valley and follows the fault line. It became blocked by a major landslide, causing the river to divert northwestwards finding a new course in the Dysynni valley, the process known as 'river capture'.

## MYTH

**Cantre'r Gwaelod** Looking down the valley from the summit you can catch a glimpse of Cardigan Bay, home to the well known legend of Cantre'r Gwaelod. It is said that a great tract of low lying rich farmland reached from Pembrokeshire to the Llyn Peninsula, nearly 50 miles in length and holding 16 towns. Defended from the sea by sluice gates, the area was inundated when Seithenyn, the 'keeper of the gates', became drunk and forgot to close them. Trees have been spotted below the water at low tide in Tywyn and if you walk on the coast path you might catch a glimpse of the drowned houses lying beneath the waves or hear the bells of the church ringing!

◀ **Castell y Bere** Just up the valley stands the ruins of Castell y Bere, a castle built in 1221 by Llewelyn Fawr (known in English as 'Llewelyn the Great') and captured by the English in 1283. According to local folklore, a watchtower stood on top of Craig yr Aderyn's fort and was used to warn Castell y Bere of approaching danger by lighting a beacon or flying a red flag.

## PLANTS

▼ **Tormentil** Although it looks a little like a buttercup, the tormentil, *tresgl y moch* in Welsh, is actually a member of the rose family. Its four petalled yellow flowers appear May to October and typically grow low to the ground. Its medicinal properties are said to cure fever, diarrhoea, burns, sore throats, infected gums, bed wetting and toothache.



▲ **Butterwort** are a low, sticky plant which like to grow in damp conditions, they have delicate blue flowers that grow above starfish-like leaves. It is one of two insectivorous plants (the other being sundew), meaning it traps insects on its sticky leaves and digests them to supplement its diet. The Welsh name, *tafod y gors* translates as 'tongue of the bog'.



▲ **Chough** are the rarest member of the crow family and the species that elevates Craig yr Aderyn to its site of international importance. They breed and roost on the ledges of Craig yr Aderyn, and forage for insects on the cropped grassy slopes. The population has seen a steep decline in the past twenty years. This is due to agricultural changes in their habitat, today numbers are slowly on the increase. Craig yr Aderyn is a 'nursery' site for young chough with birds coming from miles around. Their Welsh name, *brân goesgoch*, means 'red-legged crow'.



▲ **Meadow Pipit** *Corhedydd y waun* in Welsh translates as 'small lark of the heath'. They can be frequently seen in pairs fluttering about in acrobatic style over grassy knolls.



▲ **Cormorant** Despite being 7km from the sea, Craig yr Aderyn is believed to support the only regular inland breeding colony of cormorant in Wales, which along with its chough population, gives it its SSSI status. The cormorant, known as *mulfran* in Welsh, is a large, mostly black coloured waterbird with a long neck and almost reptilian appearance. Typically, cormorants nest near the sea as they are supreme fishers, freshwater fish are much less fatty than salt water fish, so inland cormorants need to consume around twice the volume of fish in their daily diet.



◀ **Peregrine Falcons** are known as *hebog tremor* in Welsh which directly translates as 'foreign hawk'. It feeds primarily on birds that it catches in flight of up to 200mph, the action being called a 'stoop'. You might hear a peregrine before you see one, their call being a loud 'yip yip yip'.



## Maps

- OS Landranger map: OS124: Porthmadog & Dolgellau
- OS Explorer map: OL23: Cadair Idris & Bala Lake / Llyn Tegid

Many Welsh names describe in detail types of terrain, habitats and identifying features. Some place names refer to historical events or people, or are associated with local legends. Welsh names help to better understand, respect and value the heritage and culture of the sites in which we work. More information can be found on the last page of this document.

## Parking and Access

The main access to the summit is from the path at SH650 075, park here on the grass verge. There is a stile to access the public right of way, a restricted byway. Following the 'Wild Trail' signs bear right along an indistinct uphill permissive path, when the path forks, take the right fork approximately 200m to the more popular, lower summit of Craig yr Aderyn. Take care of the steep drop below! Alternatively, take the left fork to reach the Col Crag.

**Points of contact:** Snowdonia National Park Warden Service 01766 770274 or 01341 422878 and ask for the Llanfihangel y Pennant parish warden. NRW enquires on 03000 653000 and ask for the Natural Resources Management (NRM) Meirionnydd team.

The following section refers to best practice guidance for those less familiar with the upland environment for you to share with your groups.



### Lighting Fires

**Lighting fires** Fires can be as devastating to wildlife and habitats as they are to people and property – so be careful with naked flames and cigarettes at any time of the year. Lighting fires risks damaging the special features of the site, therefore under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is against the law to do so without the written consent of NRW.



### Wild Camping

**Wild Camping** Wild camping is discouraged on Craig yr Aderyn. There is a campsite at the foot of the rock at Llanllwyda with toilets & hot water. If you are contemplating wild camping then always follow the code of conduct which supports the principle of leaving no trace. Alternatively, 'Ty Coch', a privately owned bothy can act as an excellent base for activities, please make any enquiries to the farm at Gesail (SH 642 063).



### Ground Nesting Birds

**Ground Nesting Birds** The nests of meadow pipits, skylark & stonechat are sometimes just a scrape in the earth, which can leave them vulnerable to predation & disturbance. Dogs running free can have significant detrimental effects to their breeding success. Under the CROW Act, dogs on open access land must be kept on a short lead between 1 March to 31 July to prevent disturbance to livestock and ground nesting birds.



### Litter

**Litter** Litter in the mountains is an increasing problem. Add into your session a discussion on the impact of littering and as a group carry out all litter you find. Communicate that there is no 'acceptable' waste, not even that which is biodegradable, such as banana peels and apple cores. It takes 2 years for an orange peel to biodegrade!



### Closing Gates

**Closing gates** It is always best practice to shut gates, however a farmer may sometimes leave them open so the animals can reach food and water. Leave gates as you find them. When in a group, make sure the last person knows how to leave the gates. Always follow The Countryside Code and use gates or stiles- climbing over walls and fences will damage them and increase the risk of farm animals escaping.





## CONSERVATION DESIGNATIONS

The European Union have identified the most important sites for wildlife in Europe as the **Natura 2000** sites. There are two types of Natura 2000 sites:

- **Special Protection Areas (SPAs)** - in Wales are areas that have been designated specifically to conserve wild birds that are listed as rare and vulnerable in the Birds Directive. They also include the sites in Wales that migratory birds use as stop-off points on their journeys across the planet.

- **Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)** - have been chosen to make a significant contribution to conserving habitats and wildlife species other than birds, named in the EC Habitats Directive.

In addition to these international designations there are a number of UK conservation designations:

- **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)** are the most important sites for Wales' natural heritage and are legally designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. They help

conserve and protect the best of our wildlife, geological and physiographical heritage for the benefit of present and future generations.

- **National Nature Reserves (NNRs)** are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, or under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Wales has 76 NNRs that help protect a wide range of wildlife and landscapes. All NNRs in Wales are legally protected as SSSIs. Most are also declared under the EU Habitats Directive as SACs, SPAs or Ramsar (wetlands).

## OTHER RESOURCES

**Green Guide for Climbers** - [www.bmcshop.co.uk/products](http://www.bmcshop.co.uk/products) ([bit.ly/2nbkAiF](http://bit.ly/2nbkAiF))

**Welsh heritage** - [www.anturenwau.com](http://www.anturenwau.com) and [www.mudandrout.es.com/get-to-grips-with-welsh-names-on-your-map/](http://www.mudandrout.es.com/get-to-grips-with-welsh-names-on-your-map/)

**Wild Camping Code of Conduct** - [www.snowdonia.gov.wales/visiting/walking/where-can-you-go/wild-camping](http://www.snowdonia.gov.wales/visiting/walking/where-can-you-go/wild-camping) ([bit.ly/2k2RjJ6](http://bit.ly/2k2RjJ6))

**NRW Countryside Code** - [www.naturalresources.wales/media/1369/the-countryside-code.pdf](http://www.naturalresources.wales/media/1369/the-countryside-code.pdf)

**The British Mountaineering Council** - Regional Access Database [www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/RAD/](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/RAD/) ([bit.ly/1mAC1Sj](http://bit.ly/1mAC1Sj))

## CREDITS

**Landscape:** cover, Craig yr Aderyn crag - ©John Beatty, [www.johnbeatty.uk](http://www.johnbeatty.uk), Craig yr Aderyn quarry - Benefit of hindsight, [www.bit.ly/2DHcOE1](http://www.bit.ly/2DHcOE1), CC BY-NC-ND 2.0,  
**Other:** goats - Richard Sunderland, [www.bit.ly/2DHULOg](http://www.bit.ly/2DHULOg), CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, oak fern - Natural England, [www.bit.ly/2nmPh4A](http://www.bit.ly/2nmPh4A), CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, Castell y Bere - Welsh photographs, [www.bit.ly/2jv11Fh](http://www.bit.ly/2jv11Fh), CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, tormentil - Badly Drawn Dad, [www.bit.ly/2yMX4gg](http://www.bit.ly/2yMX4gg), CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, butterwort - Kari Pihlaviita, [www.bit.ly/2iExJz6](http://www.bit.ly/2iExJz6), CC BY-NC 2.0, chough - David Evans, [www.bit.ly/2hHTjSw](http://www.bit.ly/2hHTjSw), CC BY 2.0, meadow pipit - Kentish Plumber, [www.bit.ly/2myLAv8](http://www.bit.ly/2myLAv8), CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, cormorant, peregrine falcon - [www.northeastwildlife.co.uk](http://www.northeastwildlife.co.uk)

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