

CRIMPIAU

Site Guides for Recreation
Protected Landscapes of Wales



5. CRIMPIAU



Introduction

Sitting on the north eastern edge of Snowdonia National Park is the small, jagged peak of Crimpiau. At 475m above sea level, Crimpiau meaning 'fine, high ridges' in Welsh looks out over the Snowdon horseshoe and Mymbyr valley

to the south west, the Ogwen valley to the west, and Llyn Crafnant and the Conwy valley to the north. The area is a mixture of native woodland, heathland and open moorland.

Designation

Crimpiau's summit ridge lies within the wider Eryri SAC and SSSI, designated for its complex geological features. To the north east it looks down over the 37.5 acre Cwm Glas Crafnant NNR. Many arctic-alpine plants grow on the rocks here, and it's notable for the growth of a variety of high altitude small trees, such as ash, wych elm and hawthorn. The public bridleway flanking Nant y Geuallt passes by one of the smallest SSSIs in Gwynedd; Cors Geuallt SSSI sits to the south of Crimpiau's summit and is recognised for its special geological features.

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.

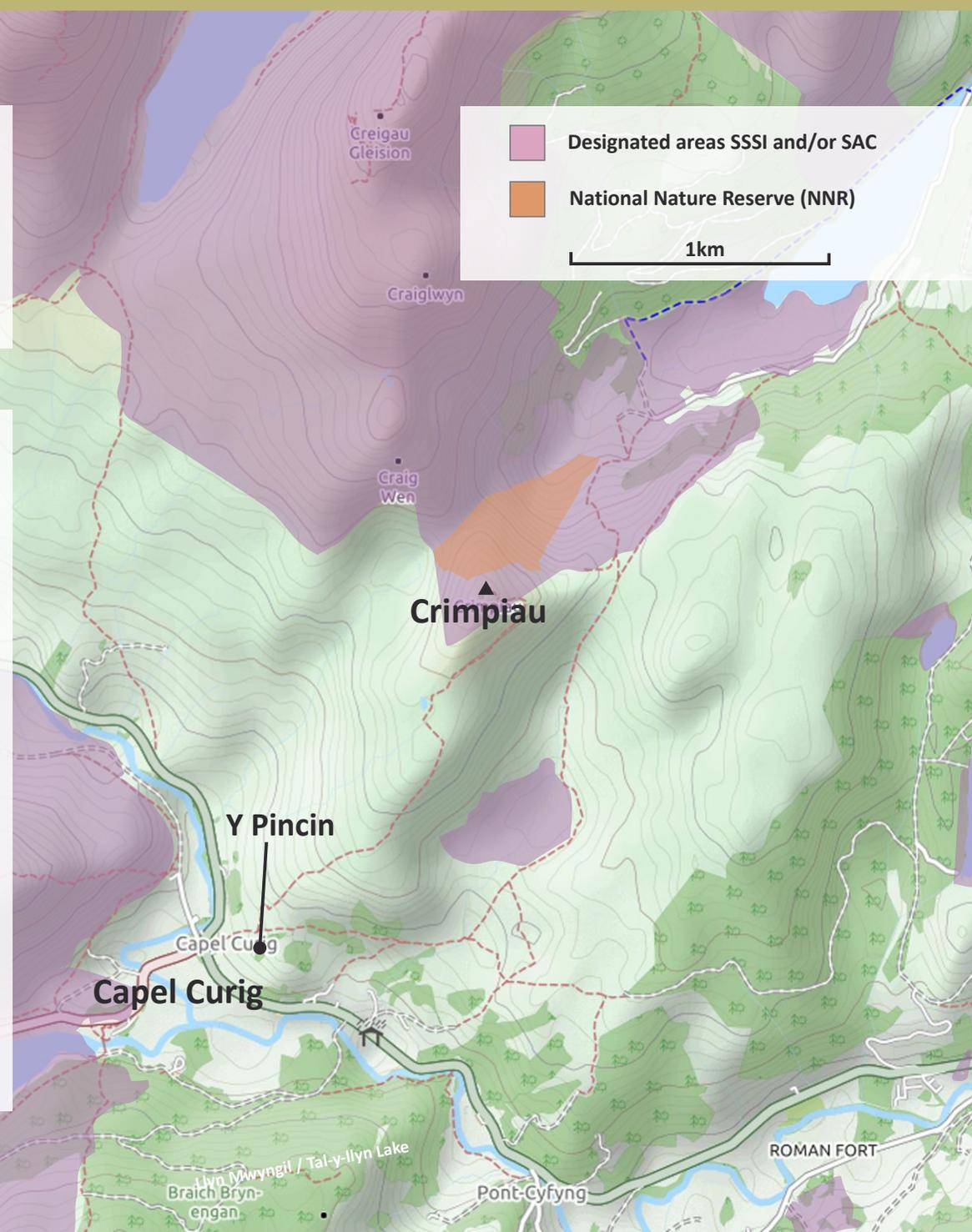
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for a wide range of habitats and species other than birds.

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.





Geology & Landscape

Cors Geuallt SSSI

encompasses the marshy area of flat land to the east of the summit of Crimpiau. A former lake basin nestled between the slopes of Clogwyn Cigfran and Nant y Geuallt, Cors Geuallt SSSI has been designated for its special geological features. It's an area of national importance due to pollen and fossilised diatoms found in the sediment within the infilled lake basin providing key evidence for climatic and vegetational changes which have occurred since the end of the last ice age 12,000 years ago.

Geology

Much of Snowdonia is made up of very tough volcanic rock that erupted over 400 million years ago. These rocks have been carved over thousands of years by water and ice into the landscape we see today. En route to the summit of Crimpiau, volcanic features 'tuffs' and 'dolerite' can be seen. Tuffs are produced by 'pyroclastic flow'; flow made up of a mixture of hot steam, ash, rock and dust, which rolled down the volcano at high speeds of up to 600mph, which then settled and hardened over time into the rocks we see today. Dolerite is existing magma, rising up through fissure vents in the earth's crust, that didn't reach the surface, the process of 'intrusion'. Over time the surface has been eroded away and exposed to the surface.

Glaciation

The mountains of Snowdonia once reached the heights of around 7000m, but today only reach 1000m. This is the result of 2 million years of erosion, mainly by water in the form of glaciers. The whole Crimpiau area was once covered in ice. Glacial erosion along the boundaries between the two main rock types, rhyolitic tuffs and intrusive dolerite, has created the low, 'knobbly' shape of the hill. The former lake basin of Cors Geuallt to the south of Crimpiau's summit, like most of the upland lakes in Snowdonia has been scoured out by ice during the last glacial period 12,000 years ago.

Cwm Glas Crafnant NNR

Volcanic, glacial and fluvial activity have all played a role in determining the different habitats that thrive here at Cwm Glas Crafnant NNR. The upper part of the valley is rocky and acidic, a natural habitat for oak trees. Among the boulders left by the actions of ice here, some soil has developed over time, giving ash, birch, rowan and hawthorn trees a chance to grow. Under the ash canopy on the weakly acidic soils plants such as the highly poisonous dog's mercury, the wood avens and wild strawberry flourish from early spring through to late summer. In other parts of the reserve, the underlying soil is more acidic, here typical hillside plants such as heather, bilberry and mat grass grow. In the boggy areas, sedges, bog mosses, marsh violets, bogbeans and the carnivorous sundew and butterwort thrive.



Craig Wen, meaning 'white crag' was formed when volcanic dolerite intrusions forced their way up 460 million years ago

Creigiau Gleision means 'grey crags' and is home to one of only two Snowdonia locations for Mountain Avens; a low lying pretty flower with 8 petals and distinctive tiny oak-shaped leaves.

Some say **Llyn Crafnant** took its name from the old Welsh name for garlic, *craf y geifr*, and *nant*, meaning valley or stream. In the spring, wild garlic can be seen (and smelt) filling the valley.

Some claim that **Clogwyn y Fuwch quarry** is one of the oldest slate mines in Wales; it is thought that the quarry started in the 18th century and the workings were mostly underground

In Welsh **Cefn Cyfarwydd** translates as 'story-tellers ridge'

Over time the **Llyn Crafnant** has decreased in size as sediment is constantly being washed into it. This is evident from the **alluvial area** at the head of the lake, colonised by reeds, rushes, willow and bog plants.



Plants

▼ **Lousewort** *melog y cŵn* in Welsh, favours damp boggy places. It was once thought that grazing animals could catch liver-fluke from this pretty little plant; it's now known that fluke and lousewort flourish in similar locations.



▼ **Sundew** *gwllithlys* in Welsh, is a low, sticky plant that likes to grow in damp conditions. It is one of two plants (the other being butterwort) found in North Wales that are insectivorous, meaning they trap insects on their sticky leaves and digest them to supplement their diet.



▲ **Milkwort** The flowers of milkwort, *amlaethai cyffredin* in Welsh, are blue, pink or white with the plant growing rarely above 15cm high. It is said the leaves of this small flower can be used as a substitute for tea. Its name comes from the (unproven) belief that it can increase the milk flow in nursing mothers.



▲ **Tormentil** Although it looks a little like a buttercup, the tormentil, 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.

▼ **Grass of Parnassus** is one of the reserve's rarest plants. A pale cup-shaped flower, Grass of Parnassus isn't actually a grass but gets its name from ancient Greece; the cattle on Mount Parnassus developed a taste for the plant, hence it was an 'honorary grass'. It was once wide spread across Wales but now only grows on certain damp moors and marshes. It is said to smell like honey.



► Bog myrtle

Known as *gwyrddling* in Welsh, bog myrtle can be found in the acidic bogs of Crimpiau. Its leaves populate the upper branches of the plant and have a strong sweet aroma. When crushed, it can allegedly be used as a midge repellent and to treat skin disorders. A yellow dye can be extracted from bog myrtle for use in tanning.





Birds



► **Buzzard** Wales' most common bird of prey, the buzzard, *bwncath* in Welsh, can be seen circling high in the updrafts around Crimpiau. It is capable of killing a wide variety of prey, such as small birds and mammals, up to the size of rabbits or pigeons, but will also eat large insects, earthworms and even carrion when prey is in short supply. They most commonly nest in trees and have a curious habit of decorating their newly built nest with fresh, green foliage.

◄ **Merlin** The merlin, *cudyll bach* in Welsh, is the UK's smallest bird of prey. They spend their summer on upland moorland and overwinter on coastal or low lying agricultural land. Merlin patrol the open moorland and crags of Crimpiau feeding on small birds or dragonflies.



► **Wheatear** are ground dwelling birds with a white rump and black 'T' shape to its tail; they can be seen hopping or running along the open, rocky ground of Crimpiau. They are migratory birds travelling thousands of miles from their winter sites in Central Africa. The Welsh name for wheatear is *tinwen y garn*, perfectly describing it as a 'white rumped bird of the rocks'.



◄ **Cuckoo** The distinctive call of the cuckoo, or *cogau* in Welsh, can be heard in the woods around Crimpiau and is often said to be the first sign of spring. It is only the male birds which make this onomatopoeic sound giving rise to their name 'cuck-oo'. Each season the female bird will lay around 18 eggs all in different birds' nests, the most common being dunnock, meadow pipit and reed bunting. These host-parent birds will then raise the cuckoo chick as their own young; in most cases the chick will evict the eggs or young of the host species. An instinctual behaviour passed down genetically.



Y Pincin

Y Pincin South of Crimpiau summit is Y Pincin, also known as The Pinnacles. A 12 meter single pitch crag with fantastic views down Dyffryn Mymbyr to Snowdon. Climbing takes place on a clean slab on the south side of the hill. The rock is clean and solid, although it is quite polished. Belays are easy to set up and access to the top of the crag is straightforward.

Elsewhere on the hill fun scrambles and easy boulder problems can be found. Glacial scratches can be seen as scars on the rocks in some places of Y Pincin, evidencing the effects of ice on the landscape.

Waenhir The small, remote building which sits under the rocky knoll of the same name is now owned by the Yeti Club, one of the smallest mountaineering clubs in the UK. A former agricultural dwelling, Waenhir is not on access land so should not be approached without invitation. Previously Ellen Pritchard lived at this remote spot with her 4 daughters. She died at 103 years old and left behind 34 grandchildren, 74 great grandchildren and 2 great, great grandchildren.

Land Management The majority of Crimpiau is open access land used for sheep farming. Sheep numbers and bracken control are carefully managed by 3 tenant farmers to ensure the grass is kept to a short sward to provide habitat for birds and insects. Heather upland is managed through seasonal cutting and burning to encourage new growth and help increase ground nesting bird populations.



Maps

- OS Landranger map: OS115: Snowdon / Yr Wyddfa
- OS Explorer map: OL17: Snowdon / Yr Wyddfa

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

If accessing Crimpiau from Capel Curig, park at the Snowdonia National Park Authority carpark, behind Joe Browns/Pinnacle stores at SH 721582. From here cross the main road with care. Walk up the track to the left of St Curig's Church opposite the junction. Follow the path top of the field, and through a gap in the wall. Bearing right takes you to the crag, to Crimpiau bear left over a stream then followed a flagged path towards the woodland to the gate. After 10 minutes cross the next stile and follow the stone pitched path, then cross the river over a small wooden bridge, turning left immediately after will bring you into the open Nant y Guellt valley. Crimpiau can be seen ahead and to the left.

If accessing Crimpiau from the north side, there is a Natural Resources Wales car park located just before the road from Trefriw reaches Llyn Crafnant at SH 757 619. From here walk along the lane parallel with the lake for about 1 km until you reach Blaen y nant, Crimpiau can be seen directly in front of you.

Points of contact: Snowdonia National Park Warden Service 01766 770274 or 01341 422 878. NRW enquiries on 03000 653 000 and ask for the National Nature Reserve Management Team

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



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!



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.



Boundaries such as dry stone walls are traditional structures that can be historical features in themselves and important aspects of the landscape. Climbing over boundary walls and fences will damage them; walls are very expensive to repair and fences are often damaged when we step onto the galvanised wire. Use stiles and gates wherever possible, and always shut gates to prevent stock escaping.



Wild camping is discouraged around Crimpiau. There are several fantastic campsites in the surrounding area, ranging from fully equipped to basic. If you are contemplating wild camping then always follow the Wild Camping code of conduct; try and minimise your visual presence by using an unobtrusive coloured tent and erecting it after dusk. Always support the principle of leaving no trace.



Geology Use of hammers and chisels on rocks is discouraged in general in the National Park and is forbidden in nature reserves, SSSIs and other protected places. Please do not damage rocks to remove fossils or rock samples.



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 - bit.ly/2nbkAiF

NRW Countryside Code - www.naturalresources.wales/media/1369/the-countryside-code.pdf

Green Guide for Walkers - bit.ly/2FFIc7a

The British Mountaineering Council - Regional Access Database bit.ly/1mAC1Sj

Welsh Heritage - bit.ly/2uXxjwg and bit.ly/2uXxjwg

Wild Camping Code of Conduct - bit.ly/2k2RjJ6

Nature of Snowdonia: A beginner's guide to the upland environment - Mike Raine (2010) Pesda Press

CREDITS

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