



Penrhiw Hotel Wildlife Report



Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Penfro
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

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This is a pilot project so we would love to receive your feedback on this information pack. You can send your comments to sarahme@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk or leave your comments in the visitor book.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Welcome to Pembrokeshire Coast National Park!

Pembrokeshire lies at the south west extreme of Wales and is surrounded on three sides by the sea. Pembrokeshire's marine and terrestrial environments are strongly influenced by the Gulf Stream and the National Park supports species found in both warmer, southern areas as well as those from colder, northern regions.

Pembrokeshire is internationally important for many of its coastal, marine and lowland heath habitat as well as ancient, semi-natural oak woodland in the North of the park. These habitats support some of our most iconic species including choughs, puffins and seals.

The high wildlife value of the Park is reflected by its nature conservation designations which include:

- 13 Special Areas of Conservation (3 Marine SACs overlap about 75% of the Park coastline and account for about 60% of the inshore area).
- 5 Special Protection Areas.
- 1 Marine Nature Reserve (Skomer) – one of three in the UK.
- 7 National Nature Reserves.
- 60 Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

With miles of rugged coastline, sandy beaches, farmland, valleys, hills and woodlands to explore, we hope this short guide will help you experience some of the fabulous wildlife our National Park has to offer.



Penrhiw

Penrhiw Hotel is a Victorian vicarage in a tranquil location on the edge of the City of St. Davids. Penrhiw means ‘top of the hill’ and the hotel is situated overlooking St. Davids Cathedral Close and the stunning St. Davids Peninsula.

This historic site dates back to the 14th century as one of the three Bishopric farms of St. David’s and along its border runs the old mill leat which connects two mediaeval mill ponds at the head of the valley, the upper millpond was used for growing small fishes and the second pond was for catching the mature fish destined for the table.

Penrhiw has a long established connection with nature. On the slopes are thorn trees believed to be 200 hundred years old and a badger sett which appears on a map as far back the 1750’s is still present today.

The land is no longer farmed and the grounds are now managed primarily for recreation and wildlife. The Victorian gardens, secluded woodland walk and stunning wildflower meadow are host to a rich variety of plants, birds, bees and butterflies for visitors to enjoy.

1 Wildflower Meadow

A stroll around a Welsh hay-meadow on a sunny day in summer is a wildlife experience not to be missed. Wildflower meadows were once common in the farmed landscape but following the intensification of agriculture after the Second World War many of these grasslands were ploughed and reseeded with more productive cultivars of grass such as Italian ryegrass. Fertiliser use also increased and the wildflowers once found in these fields in abundance were no longer able to compete with more vigorous grasses. It is estimated that around 97% of all our wildflower meadows have been lost in this way.

The Penrhiw meadow is relatively ‘new’ as it was seeded by nuns in the 1960’s. Traditionally, haymeadows were a way of drying grass to feed to animals over the winter. Meadows would be closed up in early spring and the grass left to grow on until it was mown and baled in the late summer. The meadow is managed in a way that mimics traditional haymeadow management by the grounds staff at Penrhiw and this works well as over 200 species of wild plants have been recorded here.



Oxeye Daisies

In the Penrhiw meadow you can find flowers typical of traditional haymeadows, such as the yellow pea- like flower of Bird’s-foot trefoil, the purple thistle-like heads of black knapweed, and the cheerful white heads of the oxeye daisy.

Penrhiw contains many plants reputed to have been used in traditional medicine. Self-heal has such a wide range of traditional uses it could be described as a 'cure-all'. In the UK it was mainly used to promote the healing of wounds, for sore throats and mouth ulcers, internal bleeding and heart complaints. In Chinese medicine it has been used and an anti-viral, to treat liver complaints and also cancer.



Selfheal



Yarrow

Yarrow was used as a herb to treat wounds and in addition it was prepared as a tonic for digestion and as an anti-inflammatory for the treatment of joint pain. In the 17th century it was eaten as a vegetable, cooked like spinach or added to soups. The taste is mostly sweet with a bitter edge.

Fleabane enjoys slightly wetter areas of the meadow. This plant was historically kept in the house to drive away fleas because its scent is said to be a natural insect repellent. Its generic name *Pulicaria* refers to this property with the Latin for flea being *Pulex*.



Fleabane

Some of the plants present at Penrhiw such as scarlet pimpernel, redshank and fat hen prefer disturbed ground and were often found in gateways or in fields cultivated for crops. Fat Hen was an important staple food crop in Neolithic times, its leaves were used like spinach and the seeds used as a nutritious grain. This once important plant is treated like a weed almost everywhere in the world except in northern India where it is still cultivated as a food crop. A full list of all the plants recorded in the meadow can be found at the end of this report.



Scarlet pimpernel

On warm sunny days butterfly species such as meadow brown, ringlet, small copper and common blue take advantage of the nectar offered by the flowers in the meadow. Speckled wood butterflies enjoy the shady woodland edge in particular. Many of these butterfly species use plants within the meadow for laying their eggs. Meadow browns and ringlets use common grasses such as cock's-foot and the common blue uses bird's-foot trefoil and white clover.



Common blue (top left), meadow brown (top right), Small Copper (bottom left), speckled wood (bottom right).

The meadow is also important for nocturnal species. Barn owls have been seen at Penrhiw and are known to nest nearby. Look out for them at dawn and dusk, and if you are incredibly lucky you may even see them hunting for small mammals in the meadow.

The combination of woodland, grassland and water makes this valley excellent for bats. Pembrokeshire has internationally important populations of greater and lesser Horseshoe bats, they are two of the UK's largest bats and are the only two species that roost hanging upside down. In total, 6 different bat species have been recorded within 500m of Penrhiw and the best time to see them is at dusk when they emerge to feed along the edges of the trees and around the buildings.

2 Woodland



The meadow leads on to the wooded valley which you enter through a gate along a sunken track. In spring the woodland floor is carpeted with woodland flowers including bluebells. You can also find wood avens and the intriguingly named enchanters nightshade. The root of wood avens was used as a flavouring in ale before hopping beers became widespread and in christianity this plant is associated with driving away evil.

The shady nature of the woodland makes it an excellent place for ferns, look out for Broad Buckler, Polypody and the glossy green Hart's Tounge fern. Some ferns including the polypody grow as epiphytes on the branches of trees which gives them a free leg-up into the tree canopy.



Bluebell

In woodlands birds are often heard before they are seen. On an early morning visit the woods will be alive with the sound of the dawn chorus. Robins can be seen perching on a low branch singing their cheerful song and you can listen for them any time as they are one of the only birds that sing all year round in the UK. Blackbirds sing their mellow song from a favoured perch and the valley echoes to the loud and repetitive phrases of the song thrush. You are most likely to spot the secretive wren as darts across the path with a shrill alarm call, announcing your presence.

Much of the woodland is sycamore which is not considered a native tree but is often favoured in coastal areas due to its ability to withstand salt and exposure. As the path winds back up to the house the wood becomes more diverse with horse chestnut, oak, beech, ash and yew. The yew tree is an evergreen conifer, which has a highly toxic seed contained in a fleshy red berry. This berry is a favourite of the blackbird which consumes the whole berry allowing the highly toxic seed to pass through its body without being digested. Greenfinches go one step further and can remove the toxic seed casing to access the highly nutritious embryo contained within.



Yew

3 Formal Garden

The more formal Victorian garden blends with the wooded area as native herbs and shrubs are allowed to grow at the margins of the lawns.



Within the garden area of the house things are more manicured. The grass is neatly mowed and you will find a wide array of ornamental species. Gardens are excellent places for pollinators such as bees and hoverflies, which take advantage of a range of flowers available for nectaring. The lavender in particular is a real hotspot for bumblebees.

Look out for large numbers of Common Carder bees as well as other common bumblebees such as the Buff Tailed Bumblebee, White Tailed Bumblebee and the Red Tailed Bumblebee.

Hedgehogs have also been recorded near Penrhiw, Figures taken from the Wildlife Trust suggest that their numbers have declined by 30 percent in just over ten years leaving about 1million left in the wild. They are omnivores, eating a varied diet feeding on beetles, caterpillars, earth worms, slugs, snails, bird eggs, and insects. This highlights the importance of not using slug pellets or insecticides, as with sufficient prey hedgehogs can thrive and do the job naturally.



Hedgehog

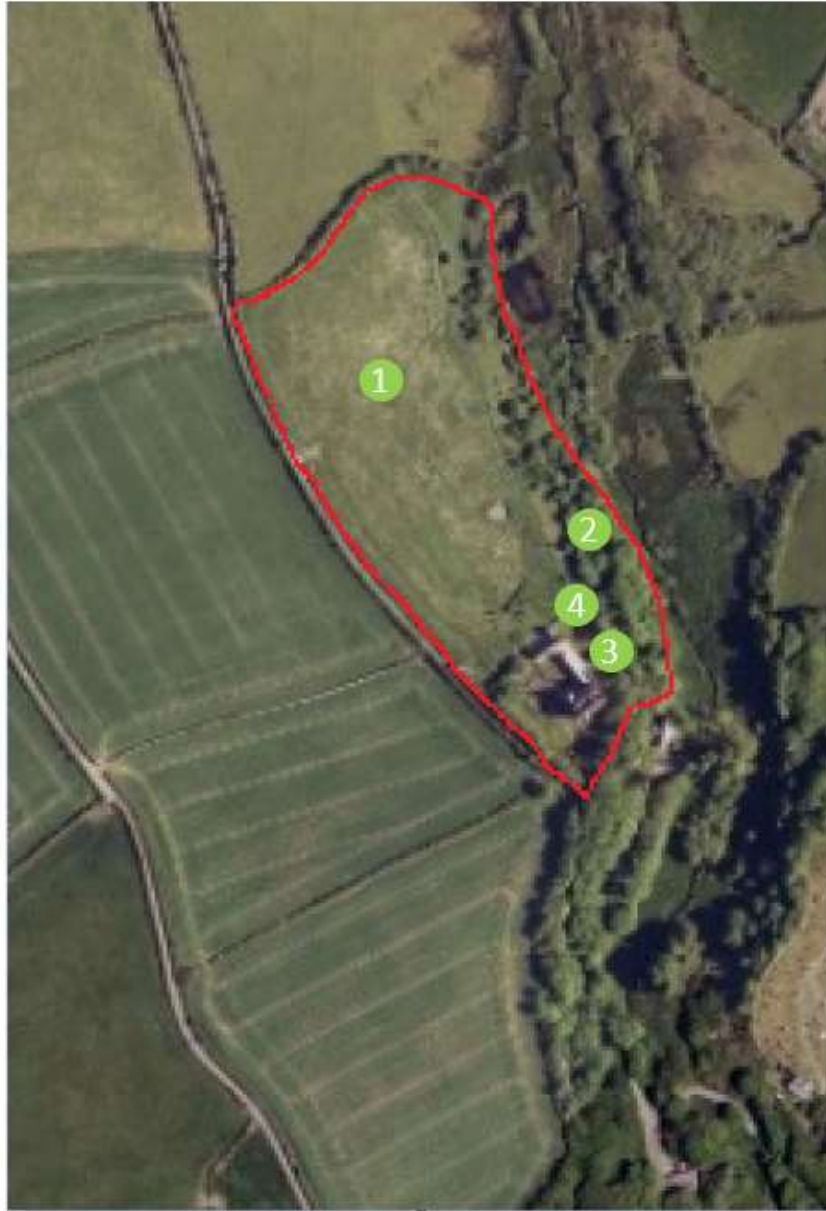
4 Stone Wall

Cutting from the back garden through to the meadow area, you pass a fantastic stone wall. Lichens colonise the stones, and plants, notably ivy-leaved toad-flax manage to grow in the mortar between the stones. Passing through the wall you walk into an area of trees that have been planted with an interesting mix of species including copper beech and scot's pine



Ivy-leaved toad-flax

Map of Penrhiw



Key

- ① Meadow
- ② Broadleaved woodland
- ③ Formal garden
- ④ Stone wall

Showing habitat areas at Penrhiw Hotel, read in conjunction with Naturally Connected Wildlife Report.

Further Afield

There is a lot of wildlife to explore on the St. Davids Peninsula, here are a few ideas for places to go to help you experience some of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park's iconic species and habitats.

1 St David's Inland Commons

The inland commons of St. David's form a stunning complex of heathland, rough grassland and wetlands right in the heart of the Peninsula. This land has been used 'in common' for centuries for the grazing of animals and the collection of fuel and building materials.

The commons are excellent places to see heathland plants such as bell heather, cross-leaved heath and western gorse as well as a range of less common plants such as lesser butterfly orchid, wavy St. Johns wort and three-lobed water crowfoot. In the summer, look out for dragonflies, damselflies and butterflies.

Dusk is a good time to spot roosting Hen Harriers and winter visitors to the commons include short-eared owls and merlins. The pools host a range of wintering waterfowl such as berwicks and whooper swans, teal, wigeon, shoveller and mallard.

Delightful and peaceful in the summer, these commons are also very atmospheric at sunset on a cold winters day. The going is rough and good footwear is required.



Teal

Dowrog Common is managed by the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales and can be reached on foot from Penrhiw.

<https://www.welshwildlife.org/em-locations/dowrog-common/>

2 St. Davids Airfield

This former military airfield is now owned by the National Park Authority and has been restored for wildlife. This is an ideal starting point to access some of the inland commons owned by the National Trust. In particular the airfield has one of the largest areas of haymeadow in Pembrokeshire (over 40ha), with abundant southern marsh orchids.

In the Spring and early Summer the meadow is alive to the sound of singing skylarks with between 40 and 60 pairs nesting here annually on the grassland between the old runways.

Some rarities around the site include yellow bartsia, lesser water plantain and lesser butterfly orchid.

www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/website/AppAccess4All/stdavids_airfield.pdf

3

St. Davids Head

The Pembrokeshire coast is home to around one third of the Chough population in Wales. They nest all around our hard coastline and St. Davids Head is an excellent place to see them. In Spring the adults pair up for breeding at nest sites in accessible cracks and sea caves on the cliffs. Feeding growing chicks is a full time job and you will see adults collecting food on the coastal grasslands and in the droughted zone at the edge of the cliff top. By summer, chicks are fledging and you may be lucky to catch a family party of four or five birds (young chough generally have a dull brown beak in contrast to the bright orange bill of the adults). Choughs are very exuberant and acrobatic flyers and watching the adults teaching the young birds to ‘find their wings’ is a delight.



View across Whitesands to the Treginnis Peninsula and Ramsey

Through the Autumn and winter many of the non-breeders and this season’s young gather together and flocks of up to 30 birds have been seen on the headland. As dusk falls you may see them having their last bite to eat before heading off to communal roost sites along the coast. These communal roosts are felt to be very important for socialising, establishing the hierarchy and also as a dating agency!

In the spring the headland is a profusion of coastal flowers such as sea campion, sea thrift and spring squill, in the late summer this gives way to the rich purple and yellow hues of the heather and gorse of the coastal heathland. Heath Spotted Orchids are a common sight in the heathlands along this stretch of coast.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/st-davids-peninsula/trails/st-davids-head-coastal-walk>

4

Ramsey Island

Islands are very special here in Pembrokeshire and Ramsey is no exception. The seabird cliffs host colonies of seabirds such as guillemots, razorbills, kittiwakes and fulmars, as well as nesting choughs, ravens and peregrines. Autumn is the time to look for migrant birds as thousands pass the coastline of the island heading south for the winter.

Around 2% of the worlds Grey Seal Population breed here in the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC. Breeding takes place in Autumn on inaccessible cobble beaches when you can see females and their fur clad pups. The darker males may be spotted patrolling offshore.

A boat tour is a great way to experience the wildlife, but if you prefer to keep your feet on dry land then a short walk around the Treginnis Peninsula is also a great way to experience the power of the tide through Ramsey Sound as well as watching seabirds and seals.

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/find-a-reserve/reserves-a-z/reserves-by-name/r/ramseyisland/index.aspx>

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/st-davids-peninsula/trails/treginnis-walk>

5 More walks

Discover your own perfect piece of the St. David's Peninsula. The National Park Authority has over 20 web walks around St. Davids to choose from, get these from the Oriel y Parc Visitor Centre or download from the website.

<http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/?PID=401>

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Species List for Penrhiw

Species List for Penrhiw, Saint David's 30th August 2016

| | Common Name | Scientific Name |
|---------------|-------------------------|---|
| Meadow | Birds foot trefoil | <i>Lotus corniculatus</i> |
| | Cleavers | <i>Galium aparine</i> |
| | Cocks foot | <i>Dactylis glomerata</i> |
| | Common bent grass | <i>Agrostis capillaris</i> |
| | Common chickweed | <i>Stellaria media</i> |
| | Common fumitory | <i>Fumaria officinalis</i> |
| | Common knapweed | <i>Centaurea nigra</i> |
| | Common mouse ear | <i>Cerastium fontanum</i> |
| | Common vetch | <i>Vicia sativa</i> |
| | Dandelion | <i>Taraxacum officinale agg</i> |
| | Equal leaved knot grass | <i>Polygonum arenastrum</i> |
| | False oat grass | <i>Arhenatherum</i> |
| | Fat hen | <i>Chenopodium album</i> |
| | Field forget me not | <i>Myosotis arvensis</i> |
| | Flea blane | <i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i> |
| | Germander speedwell | <i>Veronica chamaedrys</i> |
| | Greater plantain | <i>Plantago major</i> |
| | Hairy Tare | <i>Vicia hirsuta</i> |
| | Hogweed | <i>Heracleum sphondylium</i> |
| | Least clover | <i>Trifolium dubium</i> |
| | Lesser swine cress | <i>Lepidium didymum / Coronopus didymum</i> |
| | Lesser swinecress | <i>Coronopus didymus</i> |
| | Mallow | <i>Malva moschata</i> |
| | Meadow buttercup | <i>Ranunculus acris</i> |
| | Meadow fox tail | <i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> |
| | Meadow grass | <i>Poa annua</i> |
| | Meadow thistle | <i>Cirsium dissectum</i> |

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|----------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| | Oxeye daisy | <i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i> |
| | Perennial rye grass | |
| | Pineapple weed | <i>Matricaria discoidea</i> |
| | Prickly sow thistle | <i>Sonchus asper</i> |
| | Ragwort | <i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i> |
| | Rape | <i>Brassica napus</i> |
| | Red campion | <i>Silene dioca</i> |
| | Red clover | <i>Trifolium pratense</i> |
| | Red dead nettle | <i>Lamium purpureum</i> |
| | Red fescue | <i>Festuca rubra</i> |
| | Redshank | <i>Pericaria maculosa</i> |
| | Ribwort plantain | <i>Plantago lanceolata</i> |
| | Scarlet pimpernel | <i>Anagallis arvensis</i> |
| | Self-heal | <i>Prunella vulgaris</i> |
| | Shepard's purse | <i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i> |
| | Smooth hawk's-beard | <i>Crepis capalaris</i> |
| | Sorrel | <i>Rumex</i> |
| | Spear thistle | <i>Cirsium vulgare</i> |
| | White clover | <i>Trifolium repens</i> |
| | Wild carrot | <i>Daucus carota subspecies carota</i> |
| | Wood spurge | <i>Euphorbia amygdaloides</i> |
| | Yarrow | <i>Achillea millefolium</i> |
| | Yorkshire fog | <i>Holcus lanatus</i> |
| Woodland and Garden | Angelica | <i>Angelica sylvestris</i> |
| | Ash | <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> |
| | Beech | <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> |
| | Blackthorn | <i>Prunus spinosa</i> |
| | Bluebell | <i>Hyacinthoides species</i> |
| | Bracken | <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> |
| | Bramble | <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> |
| | Broad buckler fern | <i>Dryopteris dilatata</i> |
| | Copper beach | <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> |
| | Enchanters nightshade | <i>Circaea lutetiana</i> |
| | Ewe | <i>Taxus baccata</i> |

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|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | Foxglove | <i>Digitalis spp.</i> |
| | Ground ivy | <i>Glechoma hederacea</i> |
| | Hawthorn | <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> |
| | Hearts tongue fern | <i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i> |
| | Hedge woundwort | <i>Stachys sylvatica</i> |
| | Herb Robert | <i>Geranium robertianum</i> |
| | Horse chestnut | <i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i> |
| | Ivy leaved wall flower / toadflax | <i>Cymbalaria muralis</i> |
| | Male fern | <i>Dryopteris filixmas</i> |
| | Marsh woundwort | <i>Stack is Polisario</i> |
| | Navel / pennywort | <i>Umbilicus rupetrus</i> |
| | Nettle | <i>Urtica dioica</i> |
| | Oak | <i>Quercus robur</i> |
| | Pig nut | <i>Conopodium majus</i> |
| | Polyploidy | <i>Polypodium vulgare</i> |
| | Privet | <i>Ligustrum ovalifolium</i> |
| | Red campion | <i>Silene dioica</i> |
| | Scots pine | <i>Pinus sylvestris</i> |
| | Sycamore | <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> |
| | Viola | <i>Viola species</i> |
| | White bryony | <i>Bryonia alba</i> |
| | Wood avens | <i>Geum urbanum</i> |
| | Wood dock | <i>Rumex sanguineus</i> |
| | Woody nightshade | <i>Solanum dulcamara</i> |