

LIFE IN CAVES

Cave Life in Porth Yr Ogof—ID Chart



Spiders

Meta menardi Size 10-15mm, dark brownish, dark stripes to legs.



Habitat

In dark areas of threshold, usually not in line of sight of entrance.

Common in the flood overflow entrance by the resurgence.

Ecology

Spins a relatively small orb web typically along a wall to catch crawling insects as well as flies. Silk egg sac containing spiderlings are visible in winter.

Spiders

Meta merianae Size 4.5-9mm Lighter brown with dark spots on legs.



Habitat

In shaded entrances, in line of sight of the entrance. Common in the entrances to the 'collapse entrances'.

Ecology

Orb web spun across the entrance catches flying insects. The two spiders avoid competing with each other by utilising slightly different habitats.

Diptera (True flies)

There are a number of species including midges (photo), black flies, mosquitos and fungus gnats.



Habitat

Abundant numbers of flies in the Great Bedding Cave from a variety of families. The species probably varies depending on the time of year, usually 90% are Chironomid flies.

Ecology

Some flies overwinter in the cave. Many of these flies are associated with water as their larvae live in such habitats.

Fish Bullhead (photo) Trout



Habitat

Bullhead: In fast flowing upland streams, seen in the shallow water in the Great Bedding Cave.

Trout may be seen in entrance pool and in the deeper water of the main cave.

Ecology

Bullheads don't appear to lose their pigment unlike trout. Depigmented trout are not blind, and regain their darker colour if reintroduced to light.

Millipedes

Several species of spotted snake millipedes with (photo) and without eyes, and flat backed millipedes.



Habitat

Found on rotting wood and vegetation left by flood water.

Ecology

Detritivores feeding on decomposing plant material. Centipedes are carnivores and are uncommon in caves.

Snails

Several species of glass snail, *Oxychilus* sp., are found in caves. Many have distinctive odours including garlic. 6-16mm.



Habitat

Usually found in piles of organic debris left by flood water.

Ecology

Many are omnivorous feeding on plants and animals. Some are carnivorous.

Moths

Herald moth (left) and Tissue moth (right) are commonly found in Welsh caves.



Habita

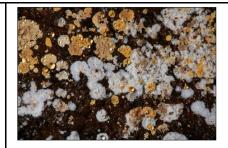
These will be found on walls above the flood zone e.g. in the small passage by the resurgence.

Ecology

Both moths overwinter in the cave. The Herald moth may spend up to 10 months in the cave.

Bacteria

The coloured patches (e.g. grey, gold, silver, purple) contain a variety of species of bacteria. There are dozens of species in each coloured patch, each colour has some characteristic dominant species.



Habitat

Often on the wall and ceiling above the flood level, and relatively close to the surface. The condensation on the patches causes them to reflect your light. In the passage leading to Mud

Ecology

Bacteria can survive without sunlight and so may be at the base of many food chains in a cave.

Woodlice

Several species of woodlice are found in Porth e.g. Androniscus dentiger 6mm (photo), Trichonischus pygmaes 2.5mm white.



Habitat

Found on rotting wood that has been left by floodwater. The more common woodlouse is often seen on the walls.

Ecology

Woodlice are vegetarian, predominately feeding on dead material.

Flatworm

Phagocata vitta (photo) 1cm, white, two eyes close together.



Habitat

Lives in cool streams, many records from caves. Found in the small gour pools at the bottom of the Creek.

Ecology

A predator it feeds on worms, shrimps and fly larvae. They have incredible powers of regeneration.

Springtails

Tiny insects up to 3mm. This photo has two species plus a tiny white mite. A number of species are troglobites.



Habitat

On mud banks and surface of pools. Most easily spotted as a white speck on top of a puddle. Easily missed due to their size.

Ecology

Many species jump a few cm, this is an escape mechanism. Most feed on fungi or decaying vegetation.

Beetles

A variety of beetles can be found in caves including ground beetles (photo), rove and water beetles.



Habitat

Water beetles in the river and in pools. Ground and rove beetles are most likely to be found near flood debris.

Ecology

Most beetles and their larvae are active predators.

Freshwater shrimp

Gammerus pulex (photo), 1-2cm, has eyes that are visible.

The troglobite shrimp Niphargus fontanus is smaller, white and has no eyes.



Habitat

Gammerus is found in surface streams but can survive underground if there is enough food. Sometimes in the Maze or in the main stream. Niphargus may be found in Hywels Grotto.

Ecology

Underground specimens of Gammerus may become white.

Niphargus will be found where it does not have to compete with Gammerus.

Both are omnivorous.

Resource prepared by Andy Lewington (CIC). Resource production funded by NRW in partnership with the LIFE IN CAVES

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