










LIFE IN CAVES


Cave Life in Porth Yr Ogof—ID Chart


<p>Spiders <i>Meta menardi</i> Size 10-15mm, dark brownish, dark stripes to legs.</p>		<p>Habitat In dark areas of threshold, usually not in line of sight of entrance. Common in the flood overflow entrance by the resurgence.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Spiders <i>Meta merianae</i> Size 4.5-9mm Lighter brown with dark spots on legs.</p>		<p>Habitat In shaded entrances, in line of sight of the entrance. Common in the entrances to the 'collapse entrances'.</p>	<p>Ecology Orb web spun across the entrance catches flying insects. The two spiders avoid competing with each other by utilising slightly different habitats.</p>
<p>Diptera (True flies) There are a number of species including midges (photo), black flies, mosquitos and fungus gnats.</p>		<p>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.</p>	<p>Ecology Some flies overwinter in the cave. Many of these flies are associated with water as their larvae live in such habitats.</p>
<p>Fish Bullhead (photo) Trout</p>		<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Millipedes Several species of spotted snake millipedes with (photo) and without eyes, and flat backed millipedes.</p>		<p>Habitat Found on rotting wood and vegetation left by flood water.</p>	<p>Ecology Detritivores feeding on decomposing plant material. Centipedes are carnivores and are uncommon in caves.</p>
<p>Snails Several species of glass snail, <i>Oxychilus</i> sp., are found in caves. Many have distinctive odours including garlic. 6-16mm.</p>		<p>Habitat Usually found in piles of organic debris left by flood water.</p>	<p>Ecology Many are omnivorous feeding on plants and animals. Some are carnivorous.</p>
<p>Moths Herald moth (left) and Tissue moth (right) are commonly found in Welsh caves.</p>		<p>Habitat These will be found on walls above the flood zone e.g. in the small passage by the resurgence.</p>	<p>Ecology Both moths overwinter in the cave. The Herald moth may spend up to 10 months in the cave.</p>


<p>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.</p>		<p>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 Hall.</p>	<p>Ecology Bacteria can survive without sunlight and so may be at the base of many food chains in a cave.</p>
---	--	--	--

<p>Woodlice Several species of woodlice are found in Porth e.g. <i>Androniscus dentiger</i> 6mm (photo), <i>Trichoniscus pygmaes</i> 2.5mm white.</p>		<p>Habitat Found on rotting wood that has been left by floodwater. The more common woodlouse is often seen on the walls.</p>	<p>Ecology Woodlice are vegetarian, predominately feeding on dead material.</p>
--	---	---	--

<p>Flatworm <i>Phagocata vitta</i> (photo) 1cm, white, two eyes close together.</p>		<p>Habitat Lives in cool streams, many records from caves. Found in the small gour pools at the bottom of the Creek.</p>	<p>Ecology A predator it feeds on worms, shrimps and fly larvae. They have incredible powers of regeneration.</p>
--	---	---	--

<p>Springtails Tiny insects up to 3mm. This photo has two species plus a tiny white mite. A number of species are troglobites.</p>		<p>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.</p>	<p>Ecology Many species jump a few cm, this is an escape mechanism. Most feed on fungi or decaying vegetation.</p>
---	---	--	---

<p>Beetles A variety of beetles can be found in caves including ground beetles (photo), rove and water beetles.</p>		<p>Habitat Water beetles in the river and in pools. Ground and rove beetles are most likely to be found near flood debris.</p>	<p>Ecology Most beetles and their larvae are active predators.</p>
--	---	---	---

<p>Freshwater shrimp <i>Gammarus pulex</i> (photo), 1-2cm, has eyes that are visible. The troglobite shrimp <i>Niphargus fontanus</i> is smaller, white and has no eyes.</p>		<p>Habitat <i>Gammarus</i> is found in surface streams but can survive underground if there is enough food. Sometimes in the Maze or in the main stream. <i>Niphargus</i> may be found in Hywels Grotto.</p>	<p>Ecology Underground specimens of <i>Gammarus</i> may become white. <i>Niphargus</i> will be found where it does not have to compete with <i>Gammarus</i>. Both are omnivorous.</p>
---	---	---	--