

CNS



CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

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Cover: - Dinosaur with a Gucci hand bag—New York

EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

It's been an incredible start to the year and I think I have seen just about all of it whilst you have all been cwtched up at home in front of the fires and TV's or off on exotic holidays (yes I do get jealous when I read the emails you send me) I've been off to see where it's been coming from

Of course we've had the storms here, but I went to see them at their worst where they were dropping inches of snow and ice storms over in the US

What struck me was how well organised they were for this. The number of shops which you have to drive to as there is no pavement means that the shop owners are out there scraping with the snow ploughs they have fitted to their 4x4 pickups.

Each business seemed to clean not just it's own frontage, but the section of road leading to it and to it's own. None of this grinding to a halt at the first flake like we do here.

So in terms of Natural Selection you would think that the US culture was better adapted than we were, but here's another thought.

Back home the willow tree decided to lean on the garden wall between us and next door so it had to come down. A chain saw and an hour later and it was in our garden having taken the first step towards keeping us warm in a couple of years time when the wood has dried out, so I'm well adapted to survive another winter as well

Of course the main point here is that neither of these are survival features that are passed on so neither make much of a difference in terms of human evolution, but it shows what we have become capable of with the tools that we make to allow us to survive in these harsh conditions. What makes us keep evolving to better now we've managed to cope with all of our weaknesses. It will be our brains no doubt.. Remember the Mekon?

By the way I am sure that the Land Rover I have here is a much better vehicle than the Jeep I had there so there are still a few things that we can teach the Americans

BBTW—if you are too young to get the Mekon reference google Dan Dare !

Field Meetings Spring and Summer 2014

Please check the blog for any late changes to the programme
Mobile on the day only 07847 560027

Sunday 27th April
Start time 10am

Cowbridge
Packed lunch

A 5 to 6 mile walk in the countryside around Cowbridge in the company of Roger Milton looking at all the wildlife around along with a bit of geology and history. Bring a packed lunch to eat by the ponds. Meet at the Cattle Market car park (in the Butts off the High Street, a couple of hundred metres up the road on the opposite side of the Town Hall car park entrance).

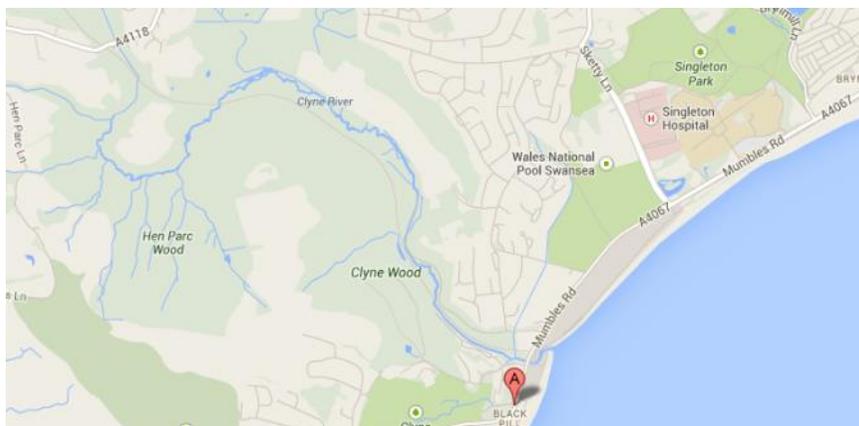
Sunday 1st June
Start time 11am

Clyne Gardens, Swansea
Packed lunch

Tony Titchen leads us around Clyne Gardens on the Mumbles side of Swansea looking at trees. Clyne Castle was purchased in 1860 by William Graham Vivian with the planting on the estate continued by his nephew Algernon.

A wide selection of specimen trees includes a British champion of *Magnolia Campbellii* var. *alba* along with an internationally famed collection of *Enkianthus*, *Pieris* and *Rhododendron*. Meet at 11am by the entrance to Clyne by the Woodman pub. From Swansea head along Oystermouth Road A 4067 to the Woodman but note that parking is very limited so allow plenty of time to find alternative on-street parking.

If you are able to or want to share lifts from Cardiff please contact Andy Kendall to see what can be arranged



Saturday 21st June
Start time 10am

Phase 1 Habitat Survey training, Wenvoe
Packed lunch

This will be a training session on completing a Phase 1 Habitat Survey led by Neil Price - an essential first step for anyone looking at potential wildlife areas.

A classroom session to start with before walking to a nearby nature reserve to put the theory into practice. This is likely to be oversubscribed and, whilst the training will be free to members of Cardiff Naturalists' Society, places are limited and must be booked by e-mailing outdoor@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

Saturday July 5th
Rob and Linda Nottage
Details to Follow

Parc Slip

Saturday July 13th
Judith Oakley
Details to Follow

Rockpool Ramble,

Saturday September 6th
Bruce McDonald
Details to Follow

Orchards around Wenvoe

More events are in the planning—keep an eye on the blog and the emails

Indoor Meetings Spring 2014

Please check the blog for any late changes to the programme

Tuesday 11^h March

we've got a confirmed date and a title from a real adventurer... And a quick update as he rushed off to Uganda.

Hi Hilary,

*I'll probably give you a talk about the TV series I'm involved in,
which is to do with human animal conflict*

I'll call it "The Making of".

See you in March! Miall

Monday 24th March

Student Bursary Evening plus Magor Marsh from the Past to the Present by Paul Cawley and Kathy Barclay

Meetings to be held in room 023 ground floor, The Cardiff School of Management Metropolitan University Llandaff Campus Western Ave Llandaff Cardiff.

The Very Hungry Caterpillars

Linda Morris



Large White

This hot summer of 2013 will be remembered in our garden for a lot of things including a bumper plum crop, abundant late butterflies (Large White, Green Veined White, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Red Admiral, Comma, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Ringlet, Skipper, Speckled Wood, and Brimstone) annoying wasps, and huge garden spiders.

It will also be remembered for caterpillars, both common and the ‘wow! have you seen this?’ variety that sent us heading for the reference books. Between July and September, they have popped up on plants, under apple and plum tree leaves, under plant pots and on the doormat.

I like nasturtiums as they give late colour until the first frosts. However this year particularly, these colourful creeping plants were infested with the caterpillars of Large Whites which munched their way through anything of the appropriate food family leaving untidy skeleton plants.

Some of them eventually managed to scale the walls of the house, heading for a secluded spot under the eaves to pupate.

Earlier in the year we saw from a distance behind our locked shed window what looked to be a trapped Large White beating it’s wings as if trying to free itself.



Comma

On closer examination it was found to be a new butterfly which had just emerged from it’s larval case...it fluttered off through the open doorway and we shared a moment of satisfaction that we had helped it on it’s way.

The next discovery turned out to be the spiky caterpillars of *Polygonia c-album*, the Comma Butterfly. These were busily nibbling away at a couple of carefully nurtured Blackcurrant cuttings, a recognised food plant, so were transferred to a mature plant where they could do less damage. The colouration is said to resemble a bird dropping.



Unknown—can you help?

Beneath the pots of cuttings a couple of larvae of an unidentified moth were found and nestling beneath the rim a couple more unknown moth caterpillars.



Looking at reference books is not easy because although the shape relates to a particular family, the pattern of lines and spots is unreliable to match for identification when one cannot see the whole caterpillar or it's at an angle or curled up.

The 2 here look like the same caterpillar at different stages, except they were on different flowerpots. Any advice appreciated which could be added as a note in the next Newsletter.

The brown caterpillar here, sheltering on the wall of the house appeared for a couple of days. If the picture is blown up then a speckling of light spots and a pattern of black spots can be seen above the stripe.



spots and a pattern of black spots can be seen above the stripe.

On the following day, the caterpillar had disappeared and in its place was the moth.

A coincidence to be sure.



Vapourer moth

We have however been able to identify two other more spectacular species, *Orgia antiqua*, the Vapourer moth which was digesting the leaves of our juvenile apple tree

Also *Acronicta psi*, the Grey Dagger which we found one day on the door mat, maybe having a rest from eating the leaves of our only garden rose!

Grey Dagger

Another species recently seen this year is the (relatively) massive larvae of *Deilephila elpenor*, the Elephant Hawk Moth.



Elephant Hawk Moth

Our final visitor spotted on the apple tree has a very distinctive profile which fits that of *Cilix glaucata*, The Chinese Character Moth which sometimes eats the foliage of apple in September-October.

A year or two ago 4 individuals were seen munching away on one of it's food plants, namely Fuschia but unfortunately we've never spotted the adults



Chinese Character Moth

As we have heard more than once 'it's all in your own back garden!'

If you can help Linda with identifications, please drop me an email to info@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk and I will pass the message on

CARDIFF BIRDWATCH

Linda Nottage

Despite an appalling weather forecast, 15 hardy souls assembled on the 5th of January 2014 in Wild Gardens Road for the annual Cardiff Birdwatch when CNS and Wildlife Trust members join forces. Calm, cloudy but dry conditions made for a pleasant (if rather chilly) stroll around Roath Park Lake and the Gardens below.

A statuesque Heron, befrilled Black Swan and handsome drake Pochard were early highlights. Steve Howe drew attention to a party of Long-tailed Tits heading for the Wild Gardens where a Song Thrush was in full voice. Mute Swans, Mallards, Tufted Ducks and Coots were plentiful, while noisy grazing goose flocks included some Greylags, Canadas and Barnacles.

Two Cormorants preening in the island tree-tops and 4 Little Grebes (only one in breeding plumage) were more easily seen through Rob's telescope. Wherever food was offered (notices now discourage feeding) gulls, mainly Black-headed with some Lesser Black-backed and Herrings, descended in flocks.

Old tree stumps sported a variety of fungi – the orange frills of Hairy Stereum being particularly abundant on a massive Holm Oak. Large soggy brackets of an Oyster Mushroom relative, possibly *Pleurotus cornucopiae*, decorated the remains of a smaller tree. Small birds were not very evident around the Lake although Nuthatch and Redwing were spotted in the tree-tops while 2 Pied Wagtails scurried on the ground below.

The Gardens below the Lake offer delights throughout the year. Today's treats included sweet-scented blossoms, early Camellia flowers, developing catkins on the Corkscrew Hazel and plenty of colourful berries. We enjoyed good views of Redwings and Blackbirds feasting on Cotoneaster berries and a Goldcrest almost within touching distance.

A Great Spotted Woodpecker was less obliging and seen by only a few lucky participants. The massive Cedar stump sprouted an assortment of fungal brackets and patches of slime-mould, defying immediate identification.

We quickened our pace on the return walk along the west side of the Lake

as the rain began on cue just before 11am. A few doughty birders decided to drive to Forest Farm and seek the shelter of the hides for an early packed lunch.

More fungal brackets encrusted a large log close to the car park – at least 4 species of which the most readily identified was Tripe Fungus, *Auricularia mesenterica*. Jays, Woodpigeons and Moorhens provided the entertainment as we watched the rain falling increasingly heavily on the hide pools.

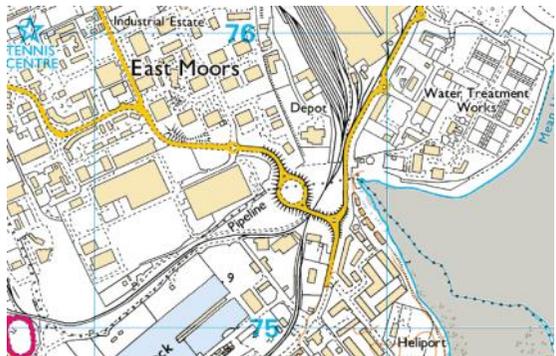
Five Snipe preening and probing near the door-less hide added to a final species total of 38. This isn't bad for a morning's activity but the surprising lack of Starlings, House Sparrows and any species of Finch depleted our tally. However, considering our earlier fears of a complete washout owing to atrocious weather, we left soggy but well satisfied.

Not Pillow Lava's, and Not Iron Mushrooms **Andy Kendall**

Some years ago back in 2009 we had a walk on the East Moors wasteland and did a botanical survey of the site bordering on to the Steel works site.

Here we were able to walk almost unhindered onto the railway line at the south end of the Tremorfa steel works. This was all written up in Newsletter 84, if you don't have a copy it's available on the website.

That day I spent some time looking out interesting photographs of industrial artefacts and decided that this was an area worth another look so I headed down one sunny day (a rare thing I know) and took a walk.



Deciding this time to head off in another direction I parked up on the verge to the East of the southern end of the steelworks and to look out onto the bay shown on the right here.

Imagine my surprise at what I found there...

The first thing I spotted were vesicular rocks with chilled crusts.

The geologist in me was instantly thinking about pillow lava's, but there were no records of such in South Wales, and certainly anything looking as fresh as this would have raised some interest as we have no volcanos recently on record



Climbing down I noted that there was iron in the “rocks” and whilst that was no real surprise when considering lava flows as Rhian and I had seen similar structures when we investigated a ruined house in Sicily (left) it still didn't seem like anything we would find in South Wales

So onwards and downwards to the shore and the first of the iron mushrooms and things started to dawn on me, that I was seeing not a natural coastline, but an archaeological one.

The mushrooms were the bases of the old furnaces from the steelworks, and had clearly been dumped on what is made ground.

A little further and the picture was clear as the coastline was littered with the remains of these furnaces and the whole shoreline was made up of



bricks and the waste of our modern industrial age.

So it makes you think what people will make in the future. Is this a new habitat to be colonised? A resource of iron to be mined and re-processed when the cheap iron from overseas is exhausted

and the price goes up or is this simply the waste generated by the shoddy behaviours of a bygone age where dumping was not regulated and profit was king



I wonder what other sites remain to be found in and around the lesser visited sites of Cardiff and look forward to hearing any news of other less visited places that you may know of.

By the way I got so fascinated with what I had found I forgot that I was meant to be looking for “arty” pictures so you just get these record shorts

Fungal Discovery's 2013 **Phill Blaning**

The Fungi ‘season’ of 2013 for me proved quite productive, discovering not only new species but also new venues for forays. Of course, the term ‘Fungi Season’ is a little misleading as Fungi can be found throughout the year not just during the Autumn, although this is when most species produce their fruiting bodies.

I began foraying in August, my first venue being Forest Fawr, better known as Castle Coch Woods, not an area I’d investigated before.



Helvella elastica

Helvella crispa

Over the next few months this site proved very productive finding amongst others, species of Bolete's, Lactarius and Helvellas. Of the latter I came across 2 species, the commonest being *Helvella crispa* or White Saddle, one area producing at least 30 fruiting bodies, the other *Helvella elastica* or Elastic Saddle.



One striking Bolete here is illustrated on the left. I don't know the species but the yellow colouring is actually an infection by the Bolete Mold, *Hypomyces chrysospermus* something I'd not previously encountered.

Away from Castell Coch, in mid Wales I came across *Boletus rubellus*, another new species for me, at the RSPB's Ynyshir Reserve.

Cwm Carn in Gwent is always worth a fungal foray in the Autumn and did not disappoint this year. Lots of Slippery Jack Boletes were seen



Infected Bolete

along with an abundance of White Saddle, which incidentally was proving to be one of the commonest species I came across in the 2013 season, and the couple of as yet unidentified species below.

Boletus rubellus

Note the Blackberry on the left hand image, this was for scale as the specimen was at least 6inches across!





Jelly Baby

Elsewhere a species of note was Jelly Baby (*Leotia lubrica*). A fungus I'd not previously seen and which I found at two sites about 25 miles apart in the same week!

Other finds of note in 2013 were this Chicken of the Woods (*Laetiporus sp.*), photographed in the Wye Valley in June during a fruitless search for White Helleborine.

Magpie Inkcap (*Coprinopsis picacea*) at Forest Fawr and in late December a wonderful colony of Common Eyelash fungus (*Scutellinia scutellata*) in woodland close to home.



An interesting 'extra' this year has been the discovery of fruiting bodies of several species of Slime Molds but maybe that's an article for another time



**Magpie Inkcap
(*Coprinopsis picacea*)
Left**

**Common Eyelash
(*Scutellinia scutellata*)
Right**



Update on the Cardiff Biodiversity Partnership **Lucy Fay**

The Cardiff Biodiversity Partnership is made of representatives from local wildlife/natural history organisations that help implement the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

A number of points were raised at the most recent meeting on 24th February which I hope some members may find interesting and/or be able to help with.

Local Wildlife Sites Project

The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales are running a pilot project looking to identify new local wildlife sites in south-east Wales. The project will focus on existing Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) that are under private ownership.

Following engagement with the landowners (who may not be aware of the biodiversity value of their land or how to manage their sites for maximum benefit to wildlife), the project hopes to restore, maintain and add value to the sites by providing land management advice to the landowners. Initially the project will identify five key grassland/heathland sites in each Local Authority from which two Glamorgan and two Gwent sites will be selected for practical conservation work.

The five sites selected in Cardiff are marshy grassland areas to the north-west of Cardiff with historic records of marsh fritillary.

If the pilot project is a success it is hoped that more funding will become available in the future to benefit more sites and help in the creation of wildlife corridors.

Do CNS members know of any sites which are designated but support rare/important flora and fauna? Perhaps you know of sites with historic records of threatened/protected species or which might benefit from some practical conservation work? Laura Dell (project co-ordinator) is keen to find out about other sites which might benefit from future funding so please get in touch with her (l.dell@welshwildlife.org) or me (lucy_fay@hotmail.co.uk) if you have any ideas.

More information on the project can be found on <http://www.welshwildlife.org/laura-tells-us-local-wildlife-sites/>

Invasive flatworm

A non-native flatworm *Kontikia ventrolineata* has been reported in Rhiwbina, the second record of this species in Wales. This flatworm is believed to have originated from Australia or New Zealand.

Kontikia ventrolineata measure 10-20mm long and 1-2mm wide. It is very dark in colour (almost black) with 2 narrow pale grey lines on its upper surface running the length of the body and four dark lines on its underside.



It has many eyes along the edge of the upper surface, but these are difficult to see because of the body colour



On the underside there are four dark lines running down the length of the body

Kontikia ventrolineata eats small invertebrates and is found during the day in damp places (e.g. under rocks, flat stones and plant pots).

(Main picture and close up by Jean-Lou Justine French Parasitologist, Professor at Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle– used under licence from <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

SINC review

Following a review of 22 SINC's in and around Cardiff in 2013, it is proposed to expand SINC's:

Castell-y-Mynach Wood – 0.9 hectares of wet woodland to be added

Nant Glandulais – 2.4 hectares of woodland to be added

Nant Ty Draw – 0.59 hectares of tributary and 1.1 hectares of woodland to be added

SEWBRc's 10th Birthday **Andy Kendall**

As those of you who get emails are aware I was asked recently to speak at this event about Mary Gillham under the title Great Welsh Naturalists.

Of course talking about one of our greatest members to an audience of people, many of whom new here and held her in the highest esteem was an honour so I spent some time reading some of her books and papers to bring myself up to speed.

I did have a few surprises in the things I found along the way which I would like to share here.

Many of you already know that Mary was one of the first women to study in the Antarctic. This was with the Australian Antarctic Division during her time in the Southern hemisphere . I found that one of her compatriots donated her photographic collections to the Museum of Victoria in Australia and these are now on-line at <http://museumvictoria.com.au/collections/search?q=mary+gillham>

Looking through Mary's papers I came across a set of newspaper clippings from the expedition which give a fascinating view of how significant this was seen in the local press. I'm going to scan these and then we will be adding them to the Mary Gillham archive

On that topic we finally sorted out the paperwork we had from Mary and we found many, many records from her adventures around the world and from also from her studies here in Wales. Therefore we have agreed to pass these records to SEWBRc who have someone who can do a more detailed analysis to come up with information that can be used to generate a proposal for scanning and indexing and data extraction. We are hoping that this project will be something that members will want to get involved with as that is part of the funding bid process where matched funding can be granted to work alongside community effort. More details will be available after their initial analysis.

It is planned that after the data mining and extraction that the papers will be passed to a suitable institution for long term archival storage. We are currently in discussion with a number of such organizations



The other aspect of the SEWBRReC event was to publicise their new on-line portal for data entry of biological records

The primary purpose of SEWBRReCORD is to make it easier for wildlife sightings to be collated, checked by experts and made available to those that need them for their research or decision making.

By registering with SEWBRReCORD you will be able to share your sightings with the recording community, explore dynamic maps and graphs of your data and make a real contribution to science and conservation.

You can find the new system at <http://www.sewbrecord.org.uk/>

We would encourage our members to make use of this system or submit records to SEWBRReC via their existing ways which you can see on their website at <http://www.sewbrec.org.uk/submit-a-record-sewbrecord.page>

And remember it does not matter if you are an expert or not. Things can be checked and it's much more important that the basic record is there than there is a data gap with no knowledge

Woodland and Grassland Surveys **Matt Harris**

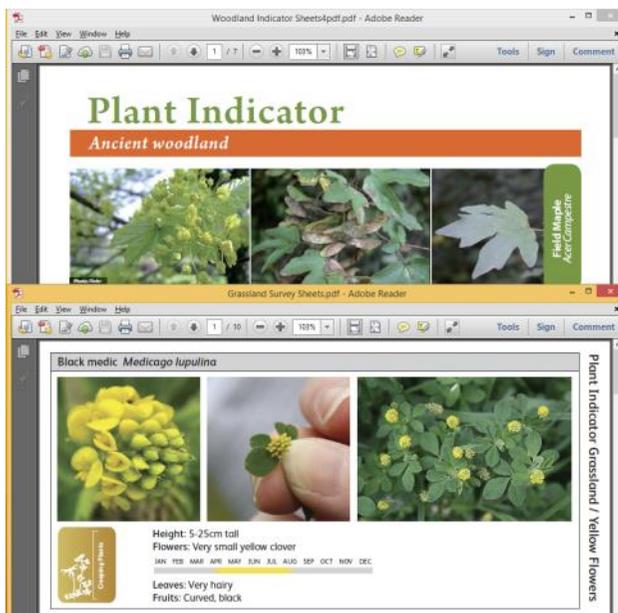
To try this out why not have a go at some identifications of your own.

We had this note from Matt Harris the County ecologist for Cardiff .

Hi
I have provided ID sheets for grassland plants and woodland ground flora, that we have developed. These are for anyone to use, but specifically if you are an

LBAP Reporter for a local group, then you could use these in conjunction with the Excel spreadsheets previously supplied, to report back to me on any of these species that you find.

These ID sheets don't contain all of the species that can be found in these habitats. Instead, they list the main indicator species which we use to judge habitats against the SINC selection criteria.



These sheets are now available on our website at

<http://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/pdf/Grassland.pdf>
<http://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/pdf/Woodland.pdf>

Matt is keen for any records of the plants listed which you can send to MBHarris@cardiff.gov.uk, but you can also send them to SEWBReC. Most of the Local authorities have agreements whereby they regularly exchange data. Unfortunately Cardiff isn't one of those (at the moment).

And Finally as the weather gets nicer don't forget...

Deadline for next newsletter 15th May 2014



Ice on the Hudson River
Photographed by Andy Kendall

This is the view from the 49th floor of a building in New York overlooking the area where the plane landed a few years ago. It shows how the reduced flow around the piers leads to ice build up

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