



CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Founded 1867

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Charity No. 1092496

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Cover: Magpie fungus (*Coprinopsis picacea*). A poisonous fungi, native to Britain. Photo: Phill Blanning.

Meetings 2019

Cardiff Birdwatch **Sunday 6th January**

Meet 10 a.m., Channel View, Cardiff Bay CF11 7HB.

There is parking overlooking the River Taff opposite the Channel View Centre on Jim Driscoll Way, off Avondale Road in Grangetown.

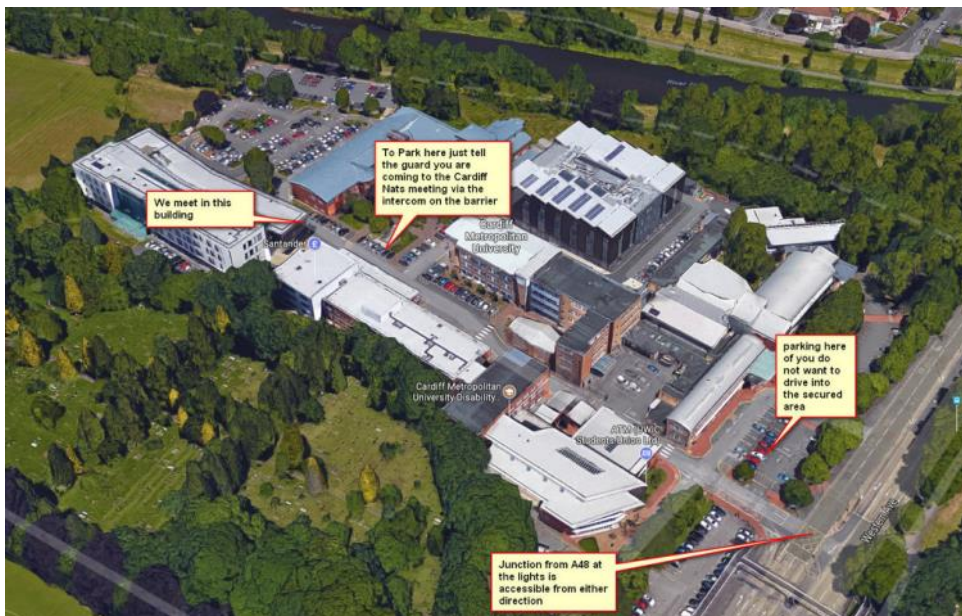
We will take a leisurely walk around parts of Cardiff Bay. On previous visits we have seen unusual winter migrants like long-tailed duck, lesser scaup and great northern diver, amongst the water birds. Weather permitting we'll continue into the afternoon so bring a packed lunch if you intend to stay. Linda and Rob Nottage will lead this joint meeting with the Cardiff Group of the Wildlife Trust.



On the 2017 Cardiff Birdwatch. Photo: Linda Nottage.

Indoor Meetings Spring 2019

All indoor meetings start at 7.30 p.m. in Room 0.23 (ground floor) of the School of Management, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Llandaff Campus, Western Avenue, Cardiff CF5 2YB (aerial view below) - unless otherwise indicated (*).



Members' Evening Monday 14th January

CNS members contribute short illustrated presentations on a diverse range of wildlife subjects. Please contact Hilary Wicks (indoor@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk) if you wish to make a short presentation.

See the website/social media for line-up closer to the date.

Restless Planet: volcanoes, earthquakes, mountains, and shifting continents

Tuesday 22nd January

Dr Geraint Owen

The Earth's surface undergoes constant change, much of it driven by forces from within the planet that cause earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Over longer timescales, these are linked to the formation of mountain chains and the relentless motion of the continents over the surface of the Earth.

Dr Geraint Owen of Swansea University will talk about how earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, mountain formation and the drifting of continents are linked through the process of plate tectonics. He will also touch on the earthquakes in South Wales in 2018.

Cardigan Bay Marine Wildlife Centre

Sunday 11th February

Beverley Phillips

Beverley Phillips, the Wildlife Trust's Living Seas Engagement Officer at the Cardigan Bay Marine Wildlife Centre in New Quay, will talk to us about the marine survey, research and education work conducted at the Centre.

Established 23 years ago, it is a popular place to learn about marine wildlife, especially dolphins and other marine mammals. Hundreds of volunteers also participate through the Centre, in activities such as beach clean ups.

Recapturing, enhancing and celebrating the unique Gwent Levels Landscape: the work of the Living Levels Landscape Partnership

Thursday 28th February (*)

Gavin Jones

The Living Levels Landscape Partnership is a Heritage Lottery Funded scheme aimed at promoting and reconnecting people to the heritage, wildlife and beauty of the historic landscape of the Gwent Levels. The partnership is led by RSPB Cymru and includes Gwent Wildlife Trust, National Resources Wales and several other partners. This is a chance to learn about some of the 24 exciting projects being conducted and what they are delivering across this unique stretch of South Wales coastline between Cardiff and Chepstow.

(*) This is a combined meeting with WTSWW and WILDSOC. The combined meetings are held in the Wallace Lecture Theatre, Cardiff University, Park Place, Cardiff CF5 2YB.

Student Bursary: Coral reef fish / Vulture conservation

Monday 11th March

An evening with two speakers: **Oonah Lessware** and **Dan Rouse**

We congratulate Oonah Lessware on winning this year's Student Bursary, in memory of Prof Ursula Henriques and Dr Mary Gillham. The award is made to a Cardiff University School of Biosciences student for their outstanding fieldwork. After receiving the award, the student will give a presentation on their work.

Oonah's fieldwork project was entitled: 'An assessment of coral reef fish assemblages and how they may shift towards or away from specialism in response to coral damage, bleaching or death'.

See page 8-10 for further information and photos.

Monday 11th March

Racing to save Africa's vultures from extinction

Dan Rouse

Vultures are misunderstood and often neglected in terms of media and awareness. Five young conservationists aim to inspire, enthuse and raise funds to help save Africa's vultures (specifically, white-headed, white-backed, Ruppell's, and hooded vultures) through talks/awareness-raising events, and competing in the gruelling 24-hour Champions of the Flyway race. Dan is competing in the Welsh team as a British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Ambassador for Carmarthenshire.

“Over the last five years, Champions of the Flyway has raised nearly \$350,000 to help BirdLife partners tackle the illegal killing of birds in the Mediterranean.

This annual real-time bird spotting race, organised by BirdLife partner, the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), as part of the Eilat Bird Festival, pitches small teams of world class birdwatchers against each other in a ‘race’ to spot the highest number of birds within a 24-hour period.

The ‘playing field’ is the Israeli birding paradise of Eilat at the southern tip of the Red Sea – home to iconic birds of the region like Little Green Bee-eaters and Palestine Sunbirds. Eilat is also a vital stopover site for millions of migratory birds.”

Source: <https://www.birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia/news/race-against-crime-5-years-champions-flyway>

Butterflies, flora and fauna of N E South Africa

Tuesday 19th March

Phill Blanning

A two-week tour of the Limpopo province of South Africa primarily looking at butterflies in the Soutpansberg mountains, but including the mammals and colourful birdlife we saw on a daily basis.



African goshawk. Photo: Phill Blanning.

Please look online for all the latest information and additions to the CNS Meetings Programme:

<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.co.uk/p/programme.html>

Coral reef fish assemblages and how they respond to coral damage and bleaching

Oonah Lessware

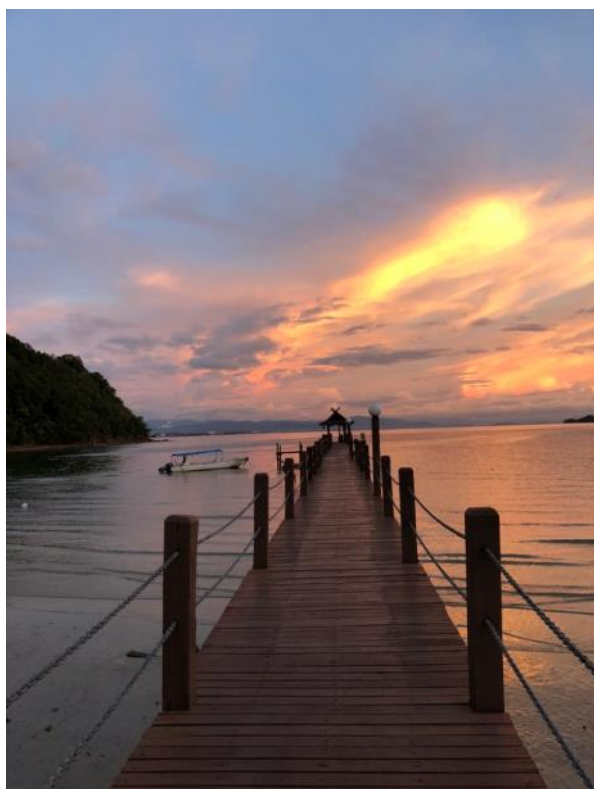
The study aimed to gauge the effects that global climate change and therefore coral reef bleaching and mortality will have on reef fish assemblages.

The goal was to determine whether the reef fish assemblages will shift towards becoming more generalist or specialist in response to coral damage or death.

The reefs in this study were within the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park in Sabah, Borneo. Species richness and abundance data was collected for both generalist and specialist fish species. Areas of varying coral damage and death were sampled.

The general findings showed that both generalist and specialist species significantly decreased in abundance and species richness as the amount of coral damage increased.







Results of a beach clean-up in Sabah, Borneo.

Photos (pages 8-11): Oonah Lessware.

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**Deadline for submissions to next Cardiff
Naturalists' Society newsletter: Friday 12 April 2019**

Plant hunting in Wales

On 27 November 2018, Alan Parfitt gave the Society a presentation about his travels around Wales photographing its rare native flora.

According to Alan, there are three types of flower photo: mugshot, close-up and, his favoured approach, plants in the context of their environment.

Primarily a landscape photographer, he has found his own way of solving the challenge of getting detailed images of flowers that also show their surroundings. The secret is getting low down and very close with a fish-eye lens, to bring the flowers and the scenery into focus. He believes this 'super wide-angle' approach makes for a more interesting photo that tells a better story.

Alan also explained how he built his own extension tube, of a much smaller size than commercially available, to combine with his wide-angle lens to achieve his distinctive pictures.

Alan's talk took us through the spring and summer at a number of important sites for rare and characteristic plants in Wales, from Anglesey to Snowdonia, the Elan Valley to the Brecon Beacons, and down to Kenfig and the Gower.

We were treated to spectacular images of yellow whitlow grass in the walls of a castle, Snowdon lily in its mountain habitat, toothwort on the banks of the river Usk, fen orchid at Kenfig, other Welsh orchids, and diverse plants in their typical habitats.

You can see more of Alan's photographs on his Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/alanparfittphotography/>

Report by Stephen Nottingham.

Photos (page 13-16): Alan Parfitt.



Spring squill in the Gower.



Snowden lily.



Fen orchid, Kenfig National Nature Reserve (NNR).



Primrose, Craig y Cilau NNR.



Starry saxifrage, Snowden.



Welsh poppy, Brecon Beacons.



Purple saxifrage, Craig Cerrig Gleisiad NNR, Brecon Beacons.



Flowering rush , Llangorse Lake.

Cosmeston Lakes Country Park



*The new carving at Cosmeston Lakes Country Park.
Photo: Stephen Nottingham.*

A Cast of Fourteen

Dr Joan Andrews, a former President (116th) of the Society and recently-retired Treasurer, has published a book entitled 'A Cast of Fourteen: A New History of the Parish of St Andrews Major, in the hundred of Dinas Powys'.

The book has its origins in Joan's presidential address to the Society.

It was launched at the Community Library in Dinas Powys on Saturday 6th October, 2018. Jane Hutt A M introduced the event, at which Joan described some of the cast of real people who lived or worked in the Parish between 1670 and 1900.

They include:

Nathaniel Wells: an eccentric priest and his grandson who became the first black man to hold public office in the United Kingdom;

Lettie Piper: a schoolgirl who sadly died of typhoid; and

Herbert Henry Lee: our last Lord of the Manor.

The book is illustrated with plentiful archive material and drawings by Zoe Daniels.

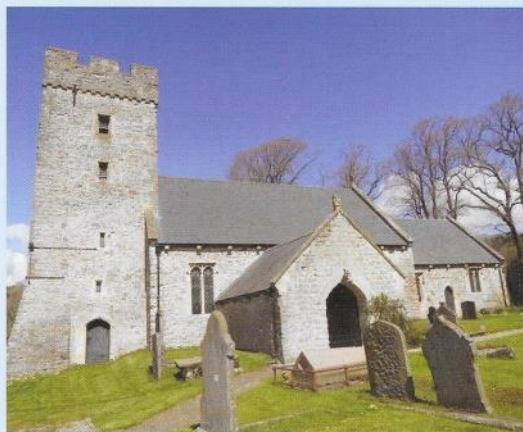
It costs £14 of which £4 goes towards the upkeep and maintenance of the Dinas Powys Library & Activity Centre, which is run by volunteers for the community.

For further information contact Joan:

joan.a2@btinternet.com



A Cast Of Fourteen



A new history of the
Parish of St. Andrews Major,
in the hundred of Dinas Powys

By Joan Andrews

Society members in His Majesties Forces

Andy Kendall

We recently remembered those who served in the British Armed Forces, on the 100th anniversary of the First World War.

On the following page is the record of Cardiff Naturalists' Society members who served in 1915, when Volume XLVIII of the Society's Transactions was published.

At this time, therefore we specifically pay our respects to George Widowfield who died in France during WWI.

You can read about the service of some of our members who became Presidents of the Society on our 150th anniversary website:

<http://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/htmlfiles/150th-08.htm>

Those whose service is of particular note include:

Dr Alfred Sheen C.B.E., M.S., F.R.C.S. (1869-1945), 39th President.

Geoffrey C.S. Ingram (1883-1971), 53rd President.

Archibald Henry Lee O.B.E., M.C., M.A. (1890-1970), 59th President.

Col. Morrey Salmon CBE, MC, DL, DSc. (1890-1985), 72nd President.

- EWEN JOHN MACLEAN, Major, R.A.M.C. (T.), Registrar and Adjutant, 3rd Western General Hospital.
- ANDREW DOWNING MEIN, Private, Honourable Artillery Company.
- DONALD R. PATERSON, M.D., Major, R.A.M.C. (T.), 3rd Western General Hospital.
- OWEN LEWELLIN RHYS, M.D., R.A.M.C. (T.), Lieutenant-Colonel, Commanding 2/2nd Welsh Field Ambulance.
- WILLIAM ASHTON RODGER, 2nd Lieutenant, 1st Battalion Welsh Regiment.
- WILLIAM ROWE, Engineer Commander, H.M.S. "Tipperary."
- ARTHUR HOWE SALMON, Private, 2nd Battalion, Honourable Artillery Company.
- EDGAR STRIGUIL SALMON, Private, Seaforth Highlanders.
- HARRY MORREY SALMON, 2nd Lieutenant, 3rd Battalion Welsh Regiment.
- HOWARD THURSTAN SALMON, Private, 21st Battalion Royal Fusiliers (4th N.P.S.).
- HAROLD A. SCHÖLBERG, Captain, R.A.M.C. (T.).
- WALTER GILBERT SCOTT, Captain, 2/7th (Cyclists) Battalion, The Welsh Regiment.
- ALFRED WILLIAM SHEEN, Lieutenant-Colonel, R.A.M.C. (T.), O.C. The Welsh General Hospital, Netley.
- CHARLES ALFRED RUSSELL STOWER, Major, 7th Battalion Queen's Royal W. Surrey Regiment.
- SIDNEY JULIAN WAKEFORD, 2nd Lieutenant, 120th Brigade R.F.A., 38th Division.
- EDWARD WALFORD, Major, R.A.M.C. (T.), Specialist Sanitary Officer and Senior Medical Officer, Severn Garrison.
- SIR HENRY WEBB, Bart., M.P., Lieutenant-Colonel, 14th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment.
- EDWARD BARTON WHITE, Major, R.A.M.C. (T.), Registrar and Adjutant, The Welsh Metropolitan War Hospital, Whitchurch.
- *GEORGE WIDOWFIELD, 2nd Lieutenant, 1st Monmouthshire Regiment.
- CECIL LOCKE WILSON, Lieutenant-Colonel, 2/7th (Cyclists) Battalion, Welsh Regiment (T.).
- HERBERT HENRY WILSON, Conducteur, Automobile Service of the French Army.
- HERBERT REDWOOD VACHELL, Lieutenant-Colonel, R.A.M.C. (T.), 3rd Western General Hospital, Cardiff.

* Died of wounds in France.

Great bustard conservation

Stephen Nottingham

The great bustard (*Otis tarda*) is the world's heaviest flying bird. It inhabits open farmland and semi-natural grasslands, where it feeds mainly on plants and insects. Once common across Europe's plains and steppes, its numbers dramatically declined during the twentieth century. Its global population may be as low as 44 000 individuals, mainly living in Spain, and it is reported as 'vulnerable' to extinction on the IUCN Red List.

Since the start of the 1990s, however, European Union (EU) funding has enabled populations of great bustard to increase in protected areas in Spain and central Europe.

I recently visited a great bustard conservation project in Austria for work. The species was practically extinct in Austria in the mid-1990s, but a series of EU LIFE projects have ensured that populations are now flourishing in protected Natura 2000 sites (the EU network of nature reserves).

In central Europe, the main threats to great bustard are the loss, degradation and fragmentation of its habitat; intensive agricultural practices; and mortality due to collisions on man-made infrastructure, especially electricity power lines.

From the early 1990s onwards, rural development programmes in Austria and Hungary supported low-intensity grazing and the autumn mowing of grasslands after the great bustard breeding season (the birds nests on the ground).

These measures were successful in increasing the number of chicks. However, the main reason for adult mortality remained, namely collisions with power lines, which limited the population recovery.

Therefore, a series of LIFE projects have had as one of their main aims the burying of power lines in nature reserves where great bustard occur. Around 100 km of medium-voltage power lines have been buried in great bustard habitat in Austria, and around 25 km in Hungary, in collaboration with energy companies. High-voltage power lines have been marked with devices that make them far more visible to flying great bustard.

Before these projects, up to 70% of the dead great bustard found in the field had been killed by collisions with power lines. There have been no collisions with power lines in Austria in bustard areas in the past three years, according to the current LIFE project team.

Wind turbines are everywhere in southern Austria, but not in the Natura 2000 sites where great bustard occur. An agreement reached between local authorities in Austria and BirdLife Austria means that wind turbines can no longer be sited in reserves where birds of prey and other endangered bird species are protected.

From a handful of great bustard in the early 1990s, there are now well over 400 individuals in the Natura 2000 site near the Slovakian and Hungarian border alone.



Information board inside observation tower (photo of male bustard actual size). Photo: Rainer Raab.

The focus for LIFE projects is now on extending the transboundary central European population, with cross-border actions in Austria, Hungary and Slovakia, and a planned reintroduction in the Czech Republic.

The tripoint boundary between Austria, Hungary and Slovakia occurs in the protected great bustard habitat. Birds fly freely between the countries.

Great bustard is a noted 'umbrella species', for which conservation work benefits myriad other creatures. For example, strips of mixed vegetation, planted within the ongoing bustard project, provide food for insects, many birds and small mammals, which support Imperial eagle and other birds of prey.



Dr Rainer Raab, Director of an Austrian great bustard conservation NGO (ÖGG), surveys great bustard habitat restored by an EU LIFE project. Electricity power lines have been buried throughout this area.

In the UK, EU-funding has helped support the re-introduction of great bustard, after an absence of over 180 years (it was hunted to extinction in 1832).

A milestone was reached in 2009, when the first wild-hatched chicks were recorded. In 2015, the population numbered 17 individuals, though this is much less than was originally foreseen.

These birds are not frequently seen, as they are on land owned by the Ministry of Defence on Salisbury Plain. However, I believe the Great Bustard Group still operates tours to the hide overlooking the great bustard release site (http://greatbustard.org/life_project/).



Great bustards near the Austrian-Slovakian border.



The tripoint border of Austria, Slovakia and Hungary. A wooden post and barbed wire have been left here, where the Iron Curtain used to divide Eastern and Western Europe. Great bustard found a refuge in this area during the Cold War, when the species was disappearing elsewhere in central Europe, as no intensive farming was introduced close to the border. The metal watch towers along the former border are now used by conservationists to monitor great bustard and other wildlife.



Wind turbines stop at the edge of this Austrian nature reserve.



Photos (pages 24-27): Stephen Nottingham.



Photo: Indian elephant. An image from Linda and Rob Nottage's talk to the Society on 29th October 2018.

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