

CNS



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CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER NO 100
September 2013

Charity No 1092496

<http://www.cardiffnaturalists.org.uk>
<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.com/>

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Can you help ?

Cover: - Black-tailed Skimmer Rhoose Point, Mary Salter

Editorial - Newsletter 100

Andy Kendall

First we had commercially printed formal transactions which were meant to be once a year and were often late so the idea of newsletters was devised as a means to keep in touch with members on a more frequent basis that was 100 issues ago and things have changed a lot since then.

We've moved from an A4 B&W text only production which was photocopied and stapled into one corner though inclusion of artwork as Mary Gillham took the first steps into digital preparation and then into the full digital printing age with colour as Brian Bond helped bring us forwards again.

We now publish not only on paper, but in PDF format on the website. So we now live in the internet age and communications move faster still which is why we have setup a blog site and send regular emails to members

What's sad is that we are seeing less and less feedback from our members and very disappointing numbers at some of the field meetings so council are therefore left wondering what people want from the society, and even what it's future is to be.

Successful modern groups tend to communicate via forum's share information on a daily basis and share news and ideas on a regular basis, but despite setting up the blog platform and the facebook group we still have almost no-one joining in those platforms which we can use to share news updates and reminders of events so I would like to ask what the members want that will help them.

Given how much interest there is in the environment and how much press coverage there is on it we struggle to attract new members and we have reached the point where we have had no Vice President for many years, we have President who has served longer than the normal period and wishes to stand down from the post , field meetings organization is being held together by someone who's said that they want to hand if over for three years and although we thank Lucy for stepping forward she's planning to move to Monmouth so we are once again relying on Bruce to some extent, but that's not fair given how much notice he's given us.

We really do need your ideas' input and more importantly practical help if we are to continue as a thriving society into the next half century of existence (we're 150 years old in 2017) **so please come to the AGM fired up with ideas**

Field Meetings Autumn 2013

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

**Sunday, October 13th.
Start time 11am**

**Pontypool Park
Packed Lunch**

A walk around Pontypool Park looking at trees with Tony Titchen. Meet outside the Leisure Centre in the park which is close to the public car parks (park legally as the area is checked regularly). Approaching Pontypool, look out for and follow the brown Ski Slope signs and then signs for the park. There are two car parks either side of Trosnant Street – Old Mill Car Park having 197 Long Stay spaces. The Leisure Centre has a café and toilets. For SATNAVS use NP4 8AT or SO 2853/0072

Indoor Meetings Autumn 2013

Please check the blog for any late changes to the programme

The Autumn series of evening lectures for 2013 will follow as listed on the programme and the website. All meetings will start at 7.30pm

Wednesday 25th September

AGM followed by

Andy Kendall

The Volcano's and Wildlife of Tenerife.

Tenerife is a wonderful place, dominated by the Mount Teide Volcano. There are a diverse set of geological and Wildlife highlights to be investigated inside and outside the volcano. In this talk you will get to see them all and hopefully be inspired to visit this wonderful place and see more than the standard tourist hotels and beaches.

Monday 14th October

Patricia Woods and Dr Joan Andrews

Antarctica – not the home of Polar Bears

Two past presidents of CNS. report on an outing to “Antarctica”. The Falklands wildlife and history, South Georgia and Shackleton and six different penguins made for an exciting time.

Wednesday 30th October

Roy Bailey-Wood

Aspects of the Native Orchids of Wales.

Although a small country Wales has a wide variety of habitats supporting over thirty species of Orchids. The talk will cover occurrence and distribution and aspects of current thinking on classification.

Thursday 14th November

James Vafidis

Title to be confirmed

Please note this is a combined meeting with Cardiff Wildlife Trust (WTSWW), Wildsoc of Cardiff University and Cardiff Naturalists' Society. The meeting to be held at The Wallace lecture theatre, Main Building Cardiff University

Monday 25 November
Harold Williams and Barbara Chick
Bees and Pollination of our food.

The roll of Bees in pollinating 70% of our food and what we would be left with if Bees should die out altogether.

Wednesday 4th December
Linda and Rob Nottage
Queensland – Australia.

Kangaroos, Kookaburras and Koalas, An exploration of the varied wildlife and scenery of Queensland from Brisbane to Cairns including a trip to the Great Barrier Reef.

Monday 16th December
Xmas Bash plus an illustrated talk by
Cate Barrow
Wildlife in Finland

Photos of Finnish wildlife shot in Karelia in Summer 2012 to 2013 to include Bears, Wolverines, Ospreys, Butterflies and many birds.

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

New Members please ask at the Main building reception where a notice and signs to the lecture theatre will be placed.

Deadline for next newsletter 15th November 2013

Do we have your email address ?
If not please email info@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

Book and Picture Sales

As was noted in the last newsletter we have LOADS and LOADS of really wonderful wildlife books for sale. The plan is that each and every indoor meeting this year will be preceded by a book/picture sale until I have nothing left in my front room.

There are books on just about everything and keys on all plant and animal groups, new naturalists, large format picture books and many, many books written by Mary herself.

We've boxed them up into general categories, but I won't be going through them and bringing them in any specific order as there are simply too many boxes to be going through them each time. So the best thing you can do is get there early (from about 7:00) and give yourself time to browse and chat with other members.

Most things will be name your own price, but there are some rare books we know have value and will be putting a suggested donation on. All proceeds from these sales will be going towards our Student prize fund so you'll be helping me get my front room back and the society with your donations and the next generation by funding their ~~beer~~ studies

Wild about Cardiff **Andy Kendall**

We joined with a number of other groups at this years Wild about Cardiff event. And put on a good show as you can see from the stand we had

Thanks to all those who helped, but especially to Lucy who brought along some Slow Worms for the stand on Saturday and Hilary who manned the stand on her own on the Friday.

As well as the stand we were asked to lead 2 walks, on the Saturday this was done by New member Barry and I had the pleasure of showing him around. On the Sunday this was done by Rob and Linda and we had the extra benefit of Raj Chettri's knowledge of the work that has been done on the site.



Not all things spotted were large and not all were native, for instance we had this wonderfully coloured Green Dock Leaved beetle and the Eagle Owl which

took flight from the display that had been put on and decided that it really quite fancied a wild life in the reserve. It was eventually recaptured, but not until some quite entertaining antics in hopping away just as people reached for it

The weather on the Sunday was a little nicer and we had a few more people on that walk, but nothing to see in the hides other than a fine herd of wild naturalists



Later we joined our nephew doing some pond dipping whilst wearing a really cool Dinosaur T-Shirt



All in all a good event, just a pity it had not been better advertised so more people knew it was on,



We hope that next years event is even more successful



SUMMER BIOBLITZES

Bruce McDonald

Taking part in Bioblitzes had been requested by Cardiff Naturalists' Society members as part of last year's survey into what members would like to see on offer in the programmes for both the indoor and outdoor events. The purpose of a Bioblitz is to record as many different species as possible in a given area and, usually, on a given day. It often includes some experts but there is always a role for the enthusiastic amateur and it is usually a good opportunity to learn from the specialists. The Society took place in two Bioblitzes during the summer but as they were poorly attended by our members they will not be a priority for future programmes.

The first was at Rhose Point where we had experts on moths, amphibians, beetles and other disciplines with Rob and Linda Nottage leading on botany. Claimed to be the most southerly point of mainland Wales (but Breaksea Point also makes that claim!) Rhose Point is rapidly becoming a wildlife haven with its mix of meadow, scrub and pools.



Rhose Meadow

The photo shows a typical spread of Ox-eye Daisies, *Leucanthemum vulgare* interspersed with various Buttercup species and a good sprinkling of Pyramidal Orchids, *Anacamptis pyramidalis*. Turning up on the day were also Bee Orchids, *Ophrys apifera* and Grass Vetchling, *Lathyrus nissolia*. The weather was fine but a breeze reduced the number of insects in flight.



The second Bioblitz took place at the Amelia Trust Farm in the Vale of Glamorgan. This working farm has as its principal objective the supporting and educating of vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. It extends over 160 acres including ponds and vegetable gardens but our main focus was the wildflower meadow currently not accessible by the public. This traditional meadow had on display a range of grasses interspersed with the

rayed form of Common or Black Knapweed, *Centaurea scabiosa* and Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil, *Lotus pedunculatus*.

Before the rain led to a premature cessation of the survey we had contributed about 25 new species to the Farm's records including galls such as the Common Spangle Gall, *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum* and the widespread gall on Blackthorn, *Eriophyes spinosae*. A fine-looking spider, *Araneus quadratus*, shown in the photo was found amongst its classic habitat, tall grasses. We hope to help to increase the species count for the Amelia Trust with further visits in the future.



Araneus quadratus

Why No Programme Card

As was noted in the editorial we live in the digital age and the programme card is out of date as soon as it's published (at significant cost, time and hassle) so we're dispensing with it. The latest version is always on the blog site

So how do you know what the rest of the year will bring if you are not on-line.. Here it is as it stands now and leaflets will be produced and available at indoor meetings with updates when we have them.

RHOOSE POINT and EAST ABERTHAW
Linda Nottage

Fifteen members and friends assembled in glorious sunshine at Rhoose station

2014			
Wed	15 Jan	Members Evening	Members
Wed	29 Jan	The BTO's Garden Bird Watch : the biggest year – round bird survey in the world	Mick Bailey
Mon	10 Feb	Aphids and their Parasitoids	Ed Baker
Thurs	27 Feb	Wild Glamorgan	Paul Denning
	Mar	To be arranged	To be arranged
Mon	24 Mar	Student Bursary Evening Magor Marsh from the Past to the Present	Paul Cawley and Kathy Barclay

car park on the 20th of July 2013 for this joint meeting with the Cardiff Group of the Wildlife Trust.



After 2 weeks of hot summer weather the plants were looking distinctly parched and flowers had gone over more rapidly than usual.

Nevertheless, there was still plenty of colour from pink Centaury and Restharrow, purple Tufted Vetch, Knapweed and Buddleia to golden Yellowwort, Melilot, Meadow Vetchling and Bristly Ox-tongue among many others.

Although the Southern Marsh and Common Spotted Orchids had mainly gone to seed, Pyramidal Orchids were still flowering and Marsh Helleborines made a good show at both sites.

Mammals were represented only by Rabbits at Rhoose and a dead Common Shrew at Aberthaw. The Rhoose pools contained large Carp and shoals of red-finned fish thought to be Roach.

Birds tend to keep a low profile towards the end of the breeding season but, as well as the expected waterfowl, it was pleasing to hear the songs of Skylark, Linnet and Reed Warbler at Rhoose with a Sedge Warbler joining in at Aberthaw.

The warm weather has been beneficial for insects so butterflies were much in evidence – Small Skippers, Small Tortoiseshells, Commas and several species of ‘Browns’. Day-flying 5- and 6-spot Burnet Moths were also admired as well as the striped caterpillars of Cinnabar Moths feeding on Ragwort. Red-tailed Bumblebees, Soldier Beetles, an Ichneumon fly, Meadow Grasshoppers and a Speckled Bush-cricket were all studied at close quarters.



Marsh Helleborine

However, the stars of the day were undoubtedly the dragonflies at the Rhoose

Point pools. Emperor males zoomed while a female laid eggs into a floating reed stem. Black-tailed Skimmers and Broad-bodied Chasers chased and clashed. Keeled Skimmers, usually found at heathland and



Keeled Skimmer Same pose Two photographers



Emperor Female laying eggs

A refreshing breeze all day and welcome cloud for a time compensated for the lack of shade as we enjoyed our packed lunches on a grassy bank with views over the Bristol Channel.

A smaller party reconvened in the car park at East Aberthaw for a walk down to the shore where the saltmarsh was

moorland pools, are an unexpected addition to this lime-rich site.

A well-photographed Red-veined Darter among the familiar Common Darters was probably a continental immigrant.

The rest of the Odonata consisted of plenty of Blue-tailed Damselflies and a few of their Common Blue relatives.

Many in the group were unfamiliar with these wildlife-rich sites and were impressed by their extensive variety of habitats as we explored their hidden corners. We posed for a group photo beside the stone circle marking the most southerly point of mainland Wales at Rhoose.



Red-Veined Darter

fringed with pink drifts of Sea-heath. On the pebble ridge we noted many seeding and seedling plants of Yellow Horned Poppy, Rock Samphire about to flower and Prickly Saltwort at the edge of a developing dune.



After completing a circuit of the lagoon, we strolled back to the Blue Anchor where the lure of cold drinks was too tempting for most on such a sticky summery afternoon.

Pictures by Linda Nottage, Andy Kendall & Mary Salter



Carline Thistle



A Happy Rock

Brynna Woods and Llanharan Marsh **Joyce Hoy**

It was a beautiful spring morning on Saturday 25th May 2013 as eight CNS members set off with Mark Steer for an exploration of Brynna Woods and Llanharan Marsh. Mark is a volunteer warden at this 38 hectare site and before setting out he explained that it was bordered on the north by the old Ogmore to Cardiff railway line and on the south by the main Swansea to Cardiff line.

After noting a Lesser Black-backed Gull flying overhead we walked to the first point of interest, the small meadow. En route we passed a clump of Dames Violet which could have been an escapee from Brynna House.

Also growing in this damp spot were Yellow Flag Iris, Hairy Cress, Water Dropwort and possibly Watercress. After passing an ancient oak tree estimated to be some 300 years old, we crossed a bridge over the River Ewenny Fach. Although not seen on our trip Grey Wagtails and Dippers can often be spotted from this point and brown trout frequent the river.



Setting off on the Woodland Paths

The small meadow supports many species of wild flower and it didn't take long to find one of the most interesting species to reside in this meadow a Violet Oil Beetle (*Meloe violaceus*). This beetle is one of five Oil Beetles found in the UK and is an indicator of strong mining bee populations and high quality wildflower-rich meadows. The chimney sweeper moth can also be found in this meadow. We also saw signs of recent badger activity. There were micro moths in the creeping



Wonderful Wildlife way markers

buttercup which Linda Nottage later identified as *Micropteryx calthella*.

Whilst walking to Llanharan Marsh Mark explained that the aims of the trust were to carry out conservation projects at the site to maintain and increase bio-diversity and also by establishing a network of paths to get local residents to use the site for dog walking and other recreational activities.

It is hoped that Welsh Black cattle will be put on the marsh to graze to maintain an ecosystem suitable for the Marsh Fritillary butterfly to breed.

Insects found in the bog were a hoverfly (*Leucozona locorum*) and a shiny green beetle which was a female Swollen-thighed Beetle (*Oedemera nobilis*).



The last site we visited was the large meadow which looked beautiful in the sunlight carpeted with bluebells. The sun had also brought out a few butterflies - Large White, Orange Tip and Brimstone.

The final object of interest that Mark showed us before he departed was a False Puffball – a slime mold *Enteridium lycoperda*.



Sumptuous Bluebells

Linda and Rob stayed on the site to enjoy a picnic lunch and then they completed a circuit of the reserve. Other insects that they saw were 14-spot ladybird (*Propylea 14-punctata*), Large Red Damselfly and bumblebees Garden Bumble Bee (*Bombus hortorum*), Common Carder

Bee (*B. pratorum*) and a Cuckoo Bee (*B. barbutellus*)

Also found by Linda and Rob were Speckled Wood Butterfly and two larvae of Bloody-nosed Beetle feeding on Cleavers. Hoverflies identified were *Rhingia campestris* and *Eupeodes luniger*.

As well as being an interesting natural history site one can also find relics of an industrial past. Coal mining started in these woods probably as early as the 1840's. One can still see the entrances to two of the shafts.

Bird List

Buzzard
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Woodpigeon
House Martin
Robin
Blackbird
Garden Warbler(H)
Chiffchaff(H)
Goldcrest (H)
Great Tit
Jay
Carrion Crow
Starling
Bullfinch

Plants included

Dames Violet
Hairy Cress
Yellow Flag Iris
Bluebell
Creeping Buttercup
Hemlock
Water Dropwort
Agrimony
Black Knapweed
Marsh Violet
3-cornered Leek

Who are you looking at ?

Southern
Tenerife Lizard
(*Gallotia galloti*)
from Mount Teide
Tenerife

Come to the talk to
see more



Craig y Cilau **Barry Embling**

A group of 10 enthusiastic naturalists arrived at Craig y Cilau National Nature Reserve on a fine and sunny spring day on the 18th of May 2013. Once we entered the reserve we were immediately met by a red kite circling over this wonderfully hidden place, with its spectacularly curved amphitheatre of cliffs and screes around the edge of the Mynydd Llangattock site of special scientific interest (SSSI).

We were led by John Wohlgemuth of Natural Resources Wales (NRW), complete with his day-glow tabard sporting the new logo of the 6 week old NRW.

What with the weather, the kite and John (with his wonderfully Germanic name) in such exotic attire, we were running the risk of peaking rather too early. But we need not have worried, there was much more to come...



The Natural Amphitheatre and raised bog

Wild flowers, really rare ones, were what whetted my appetite when I looked at the Field Meeting Programme beforehand.

Some of us had prepared and leaved through our wildflower field guides the night before, filled with the thoughts of seeing species that had previously been mere fantasy: the mountain medick, angular Solomon's seal and Alpine enchanter's nightshade...how could one not be enticed by such evocative sounding names?



The bog is curved up in the centre

The hand of man was everywhere to be seen, past and present. Much of the stunning limestone escarpment had been quarried on an industrial scale (luckily outside the SSSI), evidenced by lime kilns, artificial caverns and tram roads. Modern day usage seemed to be mostly by cavers, coming to explore the extensive cave system.

The cliffs are the only place to escape nibbling mouths, and these provide a refuge for the jewels in the crown of the reserve, the whitebeam's. Of the 7 subspecies present, one is a near-endemic, the lesser whitebeam (*Sorbus minima*), many of the others occur in just one or two other locations, true relics



Old Lime Kiln

and survivors...literally clinging-on for millennia. The whitbeams and the hibernating lesser horseshoe bats are part of the reason for the area being notified as a SSSI, with counts of 700 bats made during the winter.

Management of the site, as we'd expect, involved sheep, but not too many them. John was pleased to tell us that sheep numbers had been reduced with a consequent improvement to the condition of the raised bog, situated at

the foot of the cliffs. We walked across it, with its re-colonising feathery bog-moss, deer grass and bristle club rush, and the beautiful hares-tail cotton-grass, all apparently responding well to the reduced grazing.

Experimental small enclosure fences had been installed long ago, however this was as bad as over-grazing, with purple moor grass growing unhindered. Such are the challenges of managing habitats for wildlife.

Due to the very late arrival of spring this year, there was always going to be a question mark over encountering the rare flora. With John's help we searched hard for the Alpine enchanter's nightshade, but only saw its protective fence.

However, we did at this point have the added interest of Andy imparting his extensive geological knowledge and showing us sandstones and limestone rocks all mixed together.



Purple Moor Grass taking over

As the day wore-on, I wondered if these angular and enchanting flowers really existed here? Then, quite unexpectedly we were taken to a rare plant, the rather moss-like Wilson’s filmy fern, seen here at the most easterly edge of its range in Britain. It was perhaps a little plain and small, but it was thrilling for all to see. If we’d not come on the CNS field trip I doubt we’d have found it on our own!



The old Tram Road along the quarries

We saw 20+ birds in total, including marsh tit, peregrine, redstart and raven. The bright spring day was enlivened by the birdsong: singing cuckoo, willow warbler and song thrush predominating.



Makes a great place to look out

Other plants seen included: lousewort, limestone, brittle bladder and maidenhair ferns, mossy and opposite-leaved golden saxifrages and early purple orchid. Craig y Cilau that day revealed only some of its floral treasures to us...but that’s a good reason to come back, perhaps for a repeat visit with CNS sometime in the future.

Pictures by Andy Kendall

Wales Wonderful
Wildlife
Andy Kendall

With thanks to

Rob & Linda Nottage
 Raj Chettri
 Paul Bowden

Phill Blanning
 Mary Salter
 John & Margaret Samuel,
 Rhian Kendall
 Lucy Fay



Wilson's Filmy Fern

Rebecca Sheahan

Mike Scott
Eirian Edwards



and Elizabeth Cooling for coming up with the idea and providing the venue





Eidelweiss (*Leontopodium alpinum*)
on Mount Jafferau (Italian Alps near Salbertrand)

Photographed by Rhian Kendall

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