

CNS



CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Founded 1867

NEWSLETTER NO.79
SEPTEMBER 2008

Charity No 1092496
www.cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

LIST OF OFFICERS
Immediate past President
Patricia Wood

President
Roger Milton

Vice President
Vacant

Secretary
Mike Dean
36 Rowan Way
Cardiff CF14 0TD
029 20756869
Email secretary@cardiffnaturalist.org.uk

Treasurer
Dr Joan Andrews
Rothbury Cottage Mill Road
Dinas Powis
CF64 4BT
Email Treasurer@cardiffnaturalist.org.uk

Indoor meetings/Membership Secretary
Margaret Leishman
47 Heol Hir
Cardiff CF14 5AA
029 20752882
Email indoor@cardiffnaturalist.org.uk

Field Meetings Secretary
Bruce McDonald
5 Walston Close Wenvoe
CF5 6AS
02920593394
Email outdoor@cardiffnaturalist.org.uk

Publicity
Andy Kendall
Shenstone Ty'r Winch Road
Old St Mellons Cardiff CF3 5UK
Tel 029 20770707 Mob 079 6373 2277
Email info@cardiffnaturalist.org.uk

Edited, published and printed for the Cardiff Naturalists' Society
Brian Bond 22 Douglas Close Llandaff Cardiff CF5 2QT
Tel: 029 20560835 Email newsletter@cardiffnaturalist.org.uk

Cover photo Dormouse by Graham Duff at one of our meetings

Presidential Ramblings - August 2008

Following my recent return from a few weeks holiday in Hungary, it appears that at long last Summer in the UK has finally arrived.

The usual reports of Portuguese man-o-war jellyfish off the South West and Norfolk coasts and the truly delicious taste of freshly picked parasol mushrooms and giant puffballs confirmed that indeed the warmer weather is here.

Sadly the recent loss of puffins from the Farne Islands has been noted and the reasons may soon be identified, presumably it is at least in part due to the reduction in food source which has been in steady decline and moving further northwards. The populations of Hen Harriers also seem to be on the wane (and not only around the Royals' Sandringham estate !) and as we are only too aware, successful prosecutions are difficult to secure. Misguided persecution by the landed classes and their agents may not be the only reason however, food sources and perhaps chemically induced poor breeding performance may add to their plight.

On a more optimistic front, wild moose are once again roaming in the Scottish Highlands with the prospect of the reintroduction (licensing permitting) of the wolf and lynx. Going back a few millennia, what is now the British Isles has been discovered to be one of the richest habitats for dinosaurs with over 100 species roaming the land mass. it would appear that we were a dinosaur highway for these sometimes massive and diverse migrating herds. Our recent field trip to Sully Island with Tom Sharpe provided empirical evidence.

I was reading recently about advances in animal

recognition technology and it appears that scientists studying the African "jackass" penguins have been assisted by the development of computer software which enables each member of a colony (which may number tens of thousands) to be uniquely identified. The technique involves the use of a digital camera and a computer program which "identifies" the individual chest spot pattern on each bird. Previously researchers relied upon physical tagging which was both laborious and fraught with personal danger.

The new method may have widespread uses in a number of areas where individual analysis of members of seemingly homogenous groups is sought. I am however, not expecting to see it in regular use by shepherds in the Welsh hills !

It is with great sadness that we have learnt that Margaret Leishman feels that she would like to relinquish her post of Indoor Meetings Secretary when she has completed our programme for the coming year. Margaret has been doing the job very effectively for many years and her thoughtful counsel and well organised contribution will be greatly missed by us all. I would like to offer her both a personal thank you and wholehearted words of appreciation from the Officers and Membership of the Naturalist's Society.

Roger Milton



COPY FOR THE DECEMBER NEWSLETTER
BY 15TH NOVEMBER PLEASE Ed

INDOOR MEETINGS – AUTUMN 2008

The new season opens on Wednesday, 24th September with the Annual General Meeting at 7o'clock. We have provisional bookings of Room D002 on the ground floor of the main building at the UWIC Llandaff Campus on Western Avenue. The room is easily accessible via the main reception area and we hope to get confirmation of our bookings shortly. The Speech Therapy Lecture Room, where we met last year is no longer available.

The formal AGM will be followed by a talk by Roger Milton, our President, and we will continue the tradition of a glass of wine and some light refreshments to conclude our opening meeting.

The indoor meetings that follow for the remainder of the season will all begin at 7.30 p.m. starting on Thursday, 9th October, with Andrew Marvell of the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust on the work of the Welsh Archaeological Trusts.

Next, on Thursday, 23rd October, Gerry Donovan, the Project Manager of Dyffryn Gardens will talk about this important garden and something of the wildlife that inhabits it.

Richard Smith is making a return visit on Monday 10th November, describing a year in the USA giving a virtual tour of the best of the birds and other wildlife of America.

A subject of major interest will be covered by Peter Ferns of the School of Biosciences at Cardiff University, who is a former President of our Society. His subject on Tuesday, 25rd November, is Wildlife and the Cardiff Bay barrage.

This first half of the Winter Indoor season will end as usual with the Christmas Special, on Wednesday, 10th December, with our own members' contributions on their wildlife encounters. This is always a happy occasion ending with some light refreshments before we take the Christmas break.

The Indoor meetings will resume on Monday 12th January 2009. Information on these will be in the December newsletter.

PS This is my swansong on Indoor meetings. I have done the job since 1992 (16 years!) and it is high time a fresh mind took over with some new ideas! Volunteers are eagerly awaited!!

Margaret Leishman
Indoor Meetings Secretary.

Field Meetings September to December 2008

Sunday September 28th
Start time 8am

Brandon Marsh
Full day

A joint field trip with the RSPB to the Brandon Marsh Nature Reserve which is managed by the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. It is 200 acres and an SSSI on the river Avon and close to Coventry with pools, wetlands, nature trails and bird hides. The Visitor Centre has all facilities including shop and tea rooms. Cost of coach is £12 which will leave Whitchurch at 8am. Please complete the enclosed form.

Saturday October 11th
Start time 10.30am

Bute Park, Fungus Foray
Half day

A Fungus Foray around Bute Park led by Teifion Davies of the Glamorgan Fungus group. Meet at the Millennium Bridge by the Sophia Gardens car parks at 10.30 for a couple of hours stroll around Bute Park looking at the local fungi. Grid ref: ST 177/766.

Sunday October 19th
Start time 12 noon

Treegazing, Dean.
Half-day

More on trees with Tony Titchen, this time in the Forest of Dean at the Cyril Hart Arboretum which we shall be walking around. We aim to

finish by 3pm. Meet in the Arboretum car park which is off the B4226, Speech House Road, from Coleford to Cinderford. The car park is signposted near the Speech House Hotel around Grid Ref. SO 623/123

Sunday November 30th
Start time TBC

Westhay Moor
Full day

A joint field trip with the RSPB to Westhay Moor and the Avalon Marshes where we hope to see the Starling roost. Westhay Moor is a 250 acre nature reserve managed by the Somerset Wildlife Trust. At time of going to print the cost of the coach and departure has not been confirmed but is likely to be similar to the Brandon Marsh trip. Further details will be available on the Cardiff Naturalists website and forms will be available at the indoor meetings or contact Bruce.

Bruce McDonald Field Meetings Secretary

THE WENALLT PUBLIC WALK 7th MAY 2008

It would be hard to better the bluebell carpets of the Wenallt and we were blessed with warm sunny conditions in which to enjoy this natural spectacle. It is not only a visual delight since the massed ranks of blue (with only a handful of 'whitebells' scattered among them) also produce a distinctive perfume. Gratifyingly, about half the assembled group of 13 were members of the public. Lynda Garfield and I, ably supported by Dave Wellings and Rob, were substitute leaders who had spent the afternoon refamiliarising ourselves with the site after Andy Kendall was forced by a work crisis to summon stand-ins at the last minute. Rhian joined the group later and Andy finally caught up with us as the group dispersed.

Lynda and Dave explained the geology of the site, especially pointing out the interesting lumps of quartz conglomerate beside the ridge path and Devonian red sandstones of the former quarry. Later a beautiful sample of Radyr ironstone was passed round for close inspection with a hand lens. Small seams of this rock had been worked here in the past.

The ground flora of the slopes is dominated by bluebells with only small patches of other flowers such as greater stitchwort, wood sorrel and yellow archangel. However, in the valley bottom the sheets



of blue give way abruptly to carpets of white ramsons. This is probably in response to more alkaline soils derived from limestone which underlies the opposite side of Cwm Nofydd.

Common woodland birds such as song thrush, robin and wren were singing well and

good views were had of a nuthatch high in the trees. Two or three swifts flew over the car park at the start of the walk. Earlier in the afternoon on our 'recce' circuit of the wood, Rob and I had encountered other summer migrants including pied flycatcher and garden warbler near the stream and a cuckoo calling further up the valley.



Orange-tip, brimstone and speckled wood butterflies were flying then but only the last of these in the evening. The public walk turned up two surprising objects. The first of these, a mystery toadstool in grassland below the lower car

park, was probably a very early Blusher while the caterpillar out for an evening stroll along the path was identified later as probably a Dark Arches moth larva. This insect



survived being trodden on by a portly Labrador and being potted for close examination by the group before release. Its identity was supported not only on looks but also by its strange wandering behaviour – a feature highlighted in our caterpillar reference book.



Several members of the public expressed an interest in CNS and were directed to our website. We would be pleased to welcome them as new recruits.

Linda Nottage

. As Linda says I unfortunately had to support some US based computer systems and hence had to work the evening shift, We were also Dog sitting for Rhian's parents and hence she was not able to guarantee being on time. I was sad to miss the walk myself, but must express my extreme gratitude to the Linda's, Rob & Dave for their wholehearted support. I hope some of the pictures I took on Rhian and my reccie walk will make up for my absence and hope to see you again on a repeat of this in a future year

Andy Kendall

FIELD TRIP TO LAVERNOCK NATURE RESERVE,

SATURDAY, MAY 17TH

Leader – Jeff Curtis



Alongside the pond at Lavernock

We last visited Lavernock in August 2006 so this was an opportunity to see what wildlife was on display in May. As Jeff Curtis described what had been done in terms of brush-cutting and mowing it was clear that considerable progress had been made with the removal of scrub and this was showing dividends for both wildflowers and butterflies.

The dull and slightly chilly weather had the butterflies well hunkered down with just the occasional Speckled Wood, *Pararge aegeria*, on display. Dragonflies were equally scarce although Jeff found and rescued a very bedraggled Broad-bodied Chaser, *Libellula depressa*. But the diversity of flora was immediately apparent. The first field contained extensive stands of Hemlock Water Dropwort, *Oenanthe aquatica*, and Glaucous Sedge, *Carex Flacca*. As we progressed Common Vetch, *Vicia sativa*, lined the path whilst a fine clump of Ragged Robin, *Lychnis flos-cuculi* inhabited the damper ground. Sweet Vernal Grass, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, and False Brome, *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, were widespread and abundant as was Dyers Greenweed, *Genista tinctoria* which is uncommon in Glamorgan but clearly thriving at Lavernock.



A soggy Broad-bodied Chaser



Glaucous Sedge



Adders Tongue Fern

Another uncommon plant which is well-established here is the Adder's Tongue Fern, *Ophioglossum vulgatum*. Jeff pointed out the main site where it was growing in a grassy pit but we found other examples elsewhere on the reserve. At first the leaves appear similar to the Plantains but the unbranched spike is diagnostic. A solitary Burnet moth caterpillar doubled our tally of Lepidoptera and then another solitary, the Green-winged Orchid, *Anacamptis morio*, which we tip-toed around carefully.

Common Twayblade, *Listera ovata*, were doing well in the open whilst Early Purple Orchid, *Orchis mascula* flourished in the wooded area.



Burnet Moth Caterpillar

At the far end of the reserve the flora changed again with Common Rock Rose, *Helianthemum nummularium*, on the cliff-tops, Woolly Thistle,



Green Winged Orchid

Cirsium eriophorum, a few yards inland and Smooth Hawksbeard, *Crepis capillaries*, around the gun emplacements. Less common but locally abundant here was Pale Flax,

Linum bienne, whilst an observant Marc Hampton identified Small-flowered Sweetbriar, *Rosa micrantha*, a first record for the reserve.

Meanwhile the ornithologists had eyes peeled and ears tuned to the many birds that were around – a total of 29 species – the list below compiled by David Astin.

Four species of warbler, probably all breeding:

Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Chiffchaff, Blackcap.

Four species of finch:

Greenfinch, Bullfinch, Linnet, Chaffinch

Other woodland/hedgerow species:

Great Tit, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Dunnock, Robin, Wren, Starling, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Pheasant, Swallow, Swift, Collared Dove.

Waterbirds

Greater Black-backed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Shelduck, Mallard, Cormorant.

Bruce McDonald

Photographs by Margaret Samuel and Bruce McDonald

ORBITUARY
JOHN PERKINS

This is bad news indeed. John was one of the very best of colleagues. He took us round many of the American National Parks and even today I still get old friends who say “wasn't it magnificent when we were in the U.S. with John and we saw and learnt so much”. He was such a friendly as well as being a most knowledgeable man.

Together we worked with the late Jack Evans and members of the Merthyr Tydfil and District Naturalists' Society to produce the series of books on 'The Historic Taf Valleys' – another memorable collaboration.

We will all miss him sadly.

Mary Gillham

Field Trip to the Ely valley on 31 May

Fourteen of us, plus two dogs, set out on the last day of May on a magical mystery tour of the Ely valley meadows led by Linda and Rob Nottage. The weather was fine and the meadows not too wet underfoot in spite of the recent rain. Summer had arrived- the vegetation beside the footbridge in Peterston, where we started, was green and lush, and the leaves hid the singing Song thrush, Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs along the river. This was one of my 2 Km squares in the BTO Bird Atlas survey, so I was particularly keen to come along and see the changes in bird life since my visits in the winter and early spring. There was another reason for my enthusiasm - the promise of 'a lake with breeding water birds and dragonflies'. This lake was completely unknown to me as it was to the rest of the party.

The group set out at a brisk pace towards the road bridge over the river. I was left at the back trying to make a list of the birds and distracted by a small brown bird which skimmed the water and flew under the bridge- was it the Dipper I had heard singing here in the spring? I caught up with the rest in a beautiful meadow filled with the yellow of Buttercups ,and in their midst, the delightful pink of a small group of Ragged robin. Linda had stopped next to a large and very old oak tree to show us a large bracket fungus with the intriguing but aptly named 'Chicken of the woods'. We declined her invitation to taste a sample. Over head a Buzzard seemed unconcerned by mobbing Jackdaws.

Once across a small brook we entered the Lanlay water meadows, which are managed by the National Trust. On our left, the magnificent sight of Yellow flag (*Iris pseudacorus*) and on our right, we were entertained by the swirling display flights of male Demoiselles (*Agriion splendens*) with their viridian wings. Rob explained between this and the banded variety, which I had once seen on Cardiff station. However the weather conditions did not seem to suit the butterflies or dragonflies as few were seen apart from a Common Blue, an Orange Tip, some Large Whites and a few Speckled Woods. Moving along the meandering river we suddenly came across a nesting Great tit, and on the far bank, the rare Monkshood (*Aconitum napellus*) one of the most poisonous of British plants even to the touch, with its violet bonnet like flowers. It was once used as a

hunters poison, a pain-killer, and as a liniment for rheumatism.

Another species promised- the Sand martin also appropriately known as the 'river swallow' flittered overhead, their song or calls leading us to their small colony in the sandy river bank. It was difficult to estimate the number of occupied nests but I counted about 38 individual birds over the river meadows. Suddenly an unexpected sight on the other side of the river between a group of gorse bushes- the inquisitive faces of two fox cubs returned our stares. Almost on cue I caught sight of the first flowers of the Fox-glove (*Digitalis purpurea*), also known as 'fairy gloves'. Two families of Mallard with about 16 ducklings, vanished around a bend in the river, and in the distance a Willow warbler, a White throat and a Reed bunting sang. Some of the party saw a Great spotted woodpecker before we finally left the river and struck north across the fields towards Bryn farm and the lane to Pendoylan. After negotiating an electric fence on the far side of a small field on the north side of the lane but still keeping to the public footpath, we finally reached the mysterious man-made lake which was hidden by high banks. Immediately we were rewarded by the sight a female Tufted duck with ducklings, a rare find, and young Coots , Moorhens, Canada geese and Mute swans. Sand martins, Damselflies and Water lilies added to our pleasure as we enjoyed our picnic lunch.

We headed back towards the lane, then along to the river bridge and railway crossing, passing more Monkshood in the shaded hedgerows, turning south across a small field towards a copse in which Goldcrest and Blackcap still sang. Pausing here to negotiate a stile, I was reminded of some of the plants the party had seen in the meadows: Birdsfoot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Cut-leaved Cranesbill (*Geranium dissectum*), Silverweed (*Potentilla anserine*), Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) and Pignut (*Conopodium majus*) whose tubers were once eaten by country children.

The landscape and the fauna and flora changed as we walked back to our starting point faster now across gently sloping fields and past bemused sheep and lambs. The river was now hidden from view, but we could see in the distance to our right, Llantrisant and the gentle Glamorgan hills. The south facing hedges were filled with Red Campion (*Silene dioica*), Common Forgetmenot (*Myosotis arvensis*) which effectively mingled with the yellow Buttercups (*Ranunculus acris*) providing a natural display of colour. Horsetails (*Equisetaceae fluviatile*?) growing near a natural spring

in the hillside, provided architectural interest and evoked for me the memories of childhood. Like children on a nature ramble, we waited in turn to peer through Linda's magnifying glass at mating Boat-beetles, but nobody seemed to know the origin of this name. Certain things should remain a mystery.

By way of a postscript to my account of this delightful walk I want to return to my more scientific interest in the seasonal distribution of birds. One of the new found pleasures of the BTO Atlas is that the so called 'common' species have again become fascinating and rewarding. I did not fully realise the extent to which birds are linked to specific kinds of habitat and how this changes from season to season. For example, we saw no Meadow pipits or Skylarks on our walk although both these species are present in winter. Certainly counting familiar birds has challenged my preconceptions of what we mean by 'common' or 'local'. I saw or heard 37 species of bird during our walk which compares with the same number I saw in November, 40 in February and again 40 in May. Remarkably consistent, but the species and the total of individuals vary widely between winter and summer. For example, few Blackbirds, Chaffinches, Wrens or Robins were seen on our walk, but in February I counted 23 Blackbirds, 8 Chaffinches, 13 Robins and 6 Wrens. It is true that our so called 'resident' birds may be less visible in summer but this provides evidence of the large number of visitors. There are also passage birds like the Tree pipit which I saw in the spring. While one of the most delightful of summer visitors to the river is the Sand martin, perhaps one of rarest and nervous of the winter is the Green sandpiper. Although none were seen on our walk, I was surprised to find one, less than a month later on the 3rd of July. What a short summer!

Report by David Astin

In contributing to the Cardiff Naturalists' Society Newsletter you agree to grant us a royalty-free, non-exclusive licence to publish and otherwise use the material through web as well as print publishing worldwide. This will be in the format of a pdf copy of the newsletter unless otherwise agreed with you. And may include the publishing of the material by the National Library of Wales who have requested permission to do so and are prohibited from altering the material in any way.

(See the **Newsletter Terms and Conditions on the Cardiff Naturalists Society website** for the full terms of conditions.)

It's important to note, however, that you still own the copyright to everything you contribute to CNS Newsletter and that if your images and/or text is accepted, we will endeavor to publish your name alongside it in the Newsletter and/or website wherever it is used.

FIELD TRIP REPORT
CORYTON ROUNDABOUT, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11TH

For the second year running we have led a walk around the Coryton roundabout on the M4 (Junction 32) as a contribution to Cardiff City's Biodiversity week events. Whilst a similar range of wildlife species was seen as previously, the popularity of this walk remains undiminished with 39 people turning up.



Cross between pyramidal and Common Spotted Orchid

Having allayed the fears of those who were concerned at the prospect of having to scuttle across the motorway carriageways to reach the roundabout, we set off across the footbridge and immediately found some large stands of Goats Rue, *Galega officinalis*. Hitherto

less common around Cardiff, this is now becoming increasingly evident in our parks, such as Grangemore, and along major roads with substantial clumps

between Junctions 32 and 33 of the M4 and then, again, on the road from Junction 33 to Culverhouse Cross.



In the Middle of Coryton Roundabout

Next, a single example of the Cranesbill family was causing some puzzlement until Linda Nottage confirmed it was Hedgerow Cranesbill, *Geranium pyrenaicum*. A dull

evening ensured that there was minimal evidence of insect life but the flora was as varied and widespread as ever. Further debate was again resolved when Linda identified another mystery plant, not yet in flower, as Musk Mallow, *Malva moschata*.

Many had come to see the orchids which did not disappoint with large

numbers of Common Spotted, *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and Southern Marsh, *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* along with numerous hybrids between the two. Bee, *Ophrus apifera*, Pyramidal, *Anacamptis pyramidalis* and Common Twayblade, *Listera ovata*, were found in small numbers but the jewel in the crown is the assumed hybrid between Common Spotted and Pyramidal, shown in the photo, which is well-established here.

After an hour and a half the heavens opened and a speedy retreat was made to our starting point.

Bruce McDonald

Photos by Bruce McDonald

Minerals of the Glamorgan coast: Barry Island and adjacent areas

Lynda Garfield and Dave Wellings have now finally [after 3½ years] completed this report. The report is 92 pages long and documents the mineralogy and geology of Barry Island and the adjacent area. The report backs up the text with maps, photographs and GPS readings identifying the mineral localities and includes some local relevant history of the area.

Of interest to the Cardiff Naturalists' Society is the geological and mineralogical information published in some of the early journals. These have provided particularly useful historic information on localities which have not been written about since, until now over one hundred years later!

The report is on a DVD disc for a few pounds, which you can then print yourself, if you want to. Please contact Lynda or Dave if you would like a copy.

FIELD TRIP TO WENVOE

Saturday, June 14th

Our first visit to Wenvoe was a combined trip with the Wildlife Trust. From the centre of the village our route took us past a Tulip Tree, *Liriodendron tulipifera* followed by three interesting trees in close proximity; a Loquat, *Eriobotrya japonica*, which had managed to produce fruit in 2007; a Tree of Heaven, *Ailanthus altissima*, and a *Clerodendron* probably



Emperor Dragonfly

trichotomum var. *fargesii*. On the outskirts of the village a foot-path through woodland brought us to two fields known locally as the Orchid Fields which are in Council ownership and which it is hoped will become a designated Nature Reserve. The Lower Field is managed as a traditional meadow with an annual hay crop taken in the Summer. This was home to a few thousand Common Spotted Orchids, *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* but it was a matter of minutes before eagle-eyed members spotted some Bee Orchids *Ophrys apifera*. Extensive tracts of Yellow Rattle, *Rhinanthus minor*, a hemiparasite, were keeping the grasses under control whilst Self-heal, *Prunella vulgaris*, and Meadow Buttercup, *Ranunculus acris* provided the splashes of colour.

The Upper Field had in recent years been invaded by Ash, Bramble and Bracken but the efforts of the Wenvoe Wildlife Group were now beginning to impose some order on the area. The diversity of flora and invertebrates was notable. Again, Common Spotted Orchids were there in their hundreds but a bonus was Common Twayblade, *Listera ovata* spilling out from the adjacent woodland. Nearby, large numbers of Bee Orchids were showing off along with a single patch of some 15 Pyramidal Orchids, *Anacamptis pyramidalis*. The Upper



Pyramidal Orchid

Field was also revealing a host of other plants with some unusually large specimens of Yellow Wort, *Blackstonia perfoliata* and Linda Nottage pointed out Slender St Johns Wort, *Hypericum pulchrum* growing on the slope.

A large number of invertebrates find a home in the Upper Field with its mix of grasses, stands of dense Bramble and surrounding hedgerows well mixed with Ash, Oak, Willow, Sweet Chestnut, Holly and Birch and an understory of Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Spindle. In our brief perambulation we saw Ringlet, *Aphantopus hyperantus* and Large Skipper, *Ochlodes venatus* along with Lacewing species and Scorpion Fly, probably *Panorpa germanica*. Whilst the latter is harmless, the pronounced scorpion-like tail on the male can give it a threatening profile. The Thick-legged Flower Beetle, *Oedemera nobilis*, posed on its customary compositae and assorted Frog-hoppers and Grasshoppers catapulted into the air as we passed by.



Returning to Wenvoe, lunch was taken alongside the Cricket pitch where the local team was comfortably skittling out its opponents. From here our route took us East, down Station Road and across the railway bridge over the long-defunct Taff Vale railway to Barry – always a good spot for Goatsbeard, *Tragopogon pratensis*. The road takes on the appearance of a sunken lane and has recently been designated a Highway Verge Conservation Zone (HVCZ) by the Vale of Glamorgan Council which ensures that mowing only takes place after the flora has had a chance to set seed. In contrast to previous years when it would have appeared closely shaven and colourless, the near vertical sides were supporting a good mix of Wild Strawberry, *Fragaria vesca*, Shining Cranesbill, *Geranium lucidum*, Field Scabious, *Knautia arvensis* and Three-nerved Sandwort, *Moehringia trinervia*. Further on an incongruous clump of Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula*



Further on an incongruous clump of Pendulous Sedge *Carex pendula*



projected into the lane.

Fields, woodland and track-ways brought us to the Salmon Leaps, a series of lakes near Michaelston-le-Pit where Salmon no longer leap but which is a good spot for birds, including wildfowl, Heron and Kingfisher and dragonflies. Emperor dragonflies, *Anax imperator* were patrolling the main waterways

Our after-dinner speaker whilst Blue-tailed, *Ischnura elegans* and Large Red, *Pyr-rhosoma nymphula* Damselflies lurked in the surrounding vegetation. A further stretch of picturesque woodland, with the Wrinstone Brook flowing through it, consisted mainly of Ash and Beech but with some fine examples of Yew and Hornbeam, along the way. The closing stretch from Wrinstone Farm back to Wenvoe produced further interest with Long-stalked Cranesbill, *Geranium columbinum*, not recorded here previously, and a debate about some clumps of aromatic herbiage was concluded with the identification of Wild Basil, *Clinopodium vulgare*, growing next to Common Calamint, *Clinopodium ascendens*.



Wrinstone Woods

Despite an indifferent forecast, the weather had been kind to us all day and the wildlife obliging.

Bruce McDonald

Photos by Bruce McDonald

FIELD TRIP TO HAILEY PARK, LLANDAFF

Wednesday, June 25th

This was our first visit to Hailey Park, a public walk which we were leading in conjunction with the Friends of Hailey Park. A good turnout of members of the public made up for the minimal attendance by Cardiff Nats members but fortunately Mary Gillham was there to give everyone the benefit of her encyclopaedic and personal knowledge of the site over many decades.

Many people, even those living in Cardiff, are unaware of Hailey Park despite its size and proximity to both the Taff and Forest Farm. Hailey Park can be divided into two areas. The southern end has rugby pitches, tennis courts and playgrounds but with a good selection of specimen trees including Walnut, *Juglans regia* and Norway Maple, *Acer platanoides*. The northern end offers more for the ardent naturalist with meadows, woodland and scrub with a variety of trees including Sycamore, Aspen, White Poplar, Willow and Alder. This area revealed the occasional Common Spotted Orchid, *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, along with French Cranesbill, *Geranium endressii*, an assumed garden escape and a selection of grasses, sedges and rushes. Well hidden-away in a thicket the Friends had found several examples of Broad-leaved Helleborine, *Epipactis helleborine*, and these were beginning to show in readiness for July flowering.



Broad Leaved Helleborine

At one point the park allows access to a small beach on the banks of the River Taff, a good spot to look out for the typical Taff birdlife in this area. As we stood there a Dipper, *Cinclus cinclus*, flew upstream but the main interest was in the Sandmartins, *Riparia riparia* which were nesting in the recesses of a mighty old stone bridge which spanned the river. The Friends had compiled an impressive collection of photographs found at Hailey Park throughout the year including mammals, invertebrates and flora, indicating the considerable biodiversity to be found in this metropolitan park.



Admiring the meadow

Anyone interested in supporting the objectives of the Friends of Hailey Park, particularly in view of the ever-present threat of development, can obtain more information from their website

<http://meadowlife-haileypark.blogspot.com/>

or contact the membership secretary Gordan Hann, 45 Ty

Mawr Road, Llandaff North, Cardiff

Tel 029 20408714

Bruce McDonald

Photos by Bruce McDonald

PRE EVENING MEETING SLIDE SHOWS

This year I am going to try out a new format for showing members images before the start of the evening.

Each evening will feature just one member's images.

For those who would like to show their pictures could you please submit them to me either on a disk or with a memory stick at the meetings.

Please provide them in a Powerpoint format of between 12 & 15 images with captions. Please use either a black background or no background at all.

I will then insert relevant future meeting dates etc and set it to run continuously.

For those who have not used Powerpoint or do not want to show a minimum of 12 pictures please give me a ring and I will be very pleased to help.

Graham Duff

Tel 02920 232622

FIELD TRIP TO OXWICH NATURE RESERVE, GOWER

Saturday, June 28th

Not only does Oxwich Bay on Gower boast one of the finest stretches of sandy beach in Britain but behind this is a nature Reserve covering dune, saltmarsh and woodland that offers some of most varied wildlife you can find in this country. Our leader for the day was Mary Lewis who lives locally and knows the



Bloody Cranesbill

reserve intimately but we were also joined by Joan Darbyshire who provided an additional layer of botanical expertise.

Within a few steps of the car park we were in amongst Pyramidal Orchids, *Anacamptis pyramidalis*,

but scattered individuals here were nothing compared with the clumps of hundreds we would see later. Vivid colour came with the Bloody Cranesbill, *Geranium sanguineum*, although it was explained that the term ‘bloody’

refers to the leaves, not the flowers, as can be seen in the photo.



Marsh Cinquefoil



Autumn Gentian

From the dune system we then entered a wetland area, negotiable with the help of boardwalks and within a few yards of each other we found Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, Marsh Cinquefoil, *Potentilla*

palustris, Water Dock, *Rumex hydrolapathum*, Bog Pimpernel, *Anagallis tenella*, Marsh Bedstraw, *Galium palustre* and Marsh Horsetail, *Equisteum palustre*. Cettis and Reed Warblers could be



White form Restharrow



White form Centaury

heard but not seen and a Whitethroat and Green Woodpecker passed by.

Back on the dune system and a surprise in the shape of Autumn



Sea Milkwort



Sea Bindweed and Oedemera Nobilis

Gentian, *Gentianella amarella* ssp. *amarella*, well-ahead of its time and surrounded by Marsh Helleborine,



Sea Holly



Round Leaved Wintergreen

Epipactis palustris. Oxwich is host to some unusual white forms of otherwise common plants including



Lunch amongst the flowers

Dovesfoot
Cranesbill,
*Geranium
pusillum*,
Restharrow,
Ononis repens
and Common
Centaurry,
*Centaureum
erythraea*.

From here we moved into saltmarsh territory marked by small clumps of Sea Milkwort, *Glaux maritima* and Rock Samphire, *Crithmum maritimum* and from there into the dunes which fronted the beach, again splashed with colour from Sea Bindweed, *Calystegia soldanella* (with *Oedemera nobilis* on the petals) and Sea Holly, *Eryngium maritimum* tempered by Sea Spurge, *Euphorbia paralias*. Sheltered further back from the surf dainty spikes of Round-leaved Wintergreen, *Pyrola rotundifolia*, loitered in the shadows.

Lunch was taken in a sea of wildflowers marked particularly by the two forms of rose common on the reserve, Burnet Rose, *Rosa spinosissima*, and Japanese Rose, *Rosa rugosa*. Look closely at the Burnet Rose photo and you should see a small pale crab spider on the edge of the petals. As the day warmed up more invertebrates put in appearances. Regular sightings of Marbled White, *Melanargia galathea*, were matched by Common Blue, *Polyommatus icarus*, and Large Skipper, *Ochlodes venatus* with Ringlets, *Aphantopus hyperantus* hovering in the shadier areas. A larva which we could not identify is shown in the photo labelled 'Mystery larva' – any help in pinning down the species would be most welcome. Then significant numbers of Poplar Beetle, *Chrysomela populi*, lined the path and although there were few Poplars about there were plenty of Willows, an alternative food source. A large click beetle, possibly *Agrypnus murina*, refused to 'click' but posed dutifully for the camera, whilst varieties of Chafer beetles struggled through the sand.

The weather held out, helping to provide us with a feast of wildlife and particular thanks to Mary and Joan for making it such an enjoyable day out.

Bruce McDonald
Photos by Bruce McDonald

A selection of photos from Oxwich by Bruce



1 Burnet Rose and Crab Spider

2 Japanese Rose

3 Mystery Larva

4 Poplar Beetle

5 Agrypnus

6 Chaffer Beetle

