

# CNS



## **CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY**

Founded 1867

NEWSLETTER NO.84  
DECEMBER 2009

Charity No 1092496  
[www.cardiffnaturalists.org.uk](http://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@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk](mailto:secretary@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk)

Treasurer

Dr Joan Andrews

Rothbury Cottage Mill Road

Dinas Powis

CF64 4BT

Email: [treasurer@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk)

Indoor meetings/Membership Secretary

Margaret Leishman

47 Heol Hir

Cardiff CF14 5AA

029 20752882

Field Meetings Secretary

Bruce McDonald

5 Walson Close Wenvoe

CF5 6AS

02920593394

Email: [fieldmeetings@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk](mailto:fieldmeetings@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk)

Publicity

Andy Kendall

Shenstone Tyr Winch Road

Old St Mellons Cardiff CF3 5UX

Tel 029 2077 0707

Mob 079 6373 2277

Email: [publicity@cardiffnaturalist.co.uk](mailto:publicity@cardiffnaturalist.co.uk)

Edited, published and printed for the Cardiff Naturalists' Society

Brian Bond 22 Douglas Close Llandaff Cardiff CF5 2QT

Tel: 029 20560835 Email: [newsletter@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk)

Cover photo Snakelocks Anemone at Oxwich by Bruce McDonald

## **PRESIDENTIAL RAMBLINGS - NOVEMBER 2009**

After what seemed to be an incredibly long period of unseasonably warm weather, November began with more of the weather conditions which we would normally expect at this time of the year.

From a personal point of view, I was disappointed not to find the usual delicious crop of field mushrooms and giant puffballs which I recorded in abundance last year. Perhaps my eyesight is failing or maybe they are still to reveal themselves, but I somehow doubt the latter !

For those members who were unable to attend our last AGM a few weeks ago it was unanimously decided to include in our summer programme the ever popular evening BBQ. Terry and Joyce Hoy eagerly volunteered to arrange a suitable venue, details of which will be publicised in a forthcoming issue of the Newsletter and at subsequent meetings.

Also discussed at the AGM was the topic of days of the week upon which we hold our evening meetings (whether to hold future meetings on a particular day e.g. Thursdays or to vary the day as has been our practice up until now). By an overwhelmingly large majority it was agreed to continue as at present and vary the days, thus making it easier to obtain guest speakers and give members who have regular commitments the chance to at least attend the majority of our lectures.

It was with great humility that I accepted the Presidency for what will now be the fourth year in a row; whilst it is a great honour to serve again, it will be my final year and we must appoint a Vice President to take over in 10 months time. Suggestions please to me or to any other Council member.

After 15 years as Indoor Meetings Secretary Margaret

Leishman has retired from the post and her place has been taken by fellow members Elizabeth Cooling and Hilary Wicks. I would like to thank Margaret both personally and on behalf of the Society for her many years of very effective and dedicated work.

The vexed issue of badger culling seems to have gone very quiet over recent months but I believe that a debate in the Assembly is scheduled to take place during November. Latest information indicates that Pembrokeshire will be the first area to receive the cull if it is sanctioned, with other areas in Wales authorised if the order is approved. No doubt we will hear more in due course.

I was fascinated to read recently of the discovery of what is thought to be the world's first recorded vegetarian spider (Bagheera kiplingi). Apparently there are at least 40,000 species of spider but only one which prefers not to eat meat. It does not expend energy creating webs to catch its prey but devotes its energies towards nest building and looking after its young. This is a true environmentalist although I doubt whether its contribution towards the issue of global methane reduction will be of monumental proportion !!

I look forward to seeing you all at one of our forthcoming meetings.

Roger Milton

---

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

## INDOOR MEETINGS – SPRING 2010

The first meeting of 2010 is on **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January**, when Dr Dan Foreman of Swansea University is making a return visit. His subject this time is ‘The African Wild Dog’. He gave us an excellent talk on otters in January last year and his new subject should be equally interesting.

**Monday 25<sup>th</sup> January** is the annual Members Evening, with a varied selection of topics. It is always helpful if contributors inform Graham Duff in advance that they are able to give a short talk of about 6-7 minutes.

Graham is our main speaker for the next meeting on **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> February** with a presentation on his recent travels in the Arctic region. ‘Iceland: Towards the Arctic Circle’ is his title.

Another popular return visitor is Dr Rob Thomas of Cardiff University who will talk to us on **Wednesday evening, 24<sup>th</sup> February** on aspects of bird behaviour learned from ‘100 years of Ringing Wild Birds’.

One of our members Laura Moss has interesting experiences to share with us in her talk on ‘Safari Guide Training Experiences in South Africa’. She will be with us on **Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> March**.

We can be sure of a fascinating glimpse of some exotic locations from Joan Andrews, on **Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> March** with her talk on ‘The Cape Floral Kingdom’, giving us a chance to share the floral delights of South Africa.

*This is my last compilation of talks for our indoor meetings. I am delighted to welcome Hilary Wicks and Elizabeth Cooling who have volunteered to take over for our next season in Autumn 2010. I am sure they will find it an enjoyable and worthwhile task.*

Margaret Leishman  
Retiring Indoor Meeting Secretary after 17 years.

## OUTDOOR MEETINGS, WINTER 2009/2010

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January  
Start time 9 am

Cardiff Birdwatch  
Packed lunch

This regular event led by Rob and Linda Nottage starts with a stroll around Roath Park and then moves on to other sites in the Cardiff area. Meet at Wild Gardens Road at the north end of Roath Park.

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March  
Start time 11am

Forest of Dean  
Packed lunch

Trees again with Tony Titchen this time looking at some of the great oaks of the Forest of Dean, a chance to distinguish your *roburs* from your *petraeas*. Meet outside the front door of the Speech House Hotel, Coleford, GL16 7EL. This is on the B 4226, Speech House Road. We aim to finish by 3.30pm.

### FUTURE EVENTS

There are likely to be several additions to the published programme as opportunities arise. Check the Cardiff Naturalists' website for updates.

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2010. A walk round Hailey Park, Cardiff looking at flowers and insects. Joint event with the Friends of Hailey Park starting 6pm or 6.30pm – to be confirmed.

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2010. The published walk around Cardiff Bay is dependent on the completion of Pont y Werin, the footbridge over the river Ely which was originally schedule for April. Latest information suggests June so we might still be OK but check the newsletter and website for updates in case we need to postpone it.

<p>Copy for the March Newsletter by 17th February please. Ed.</p>
---

## FIELD TRIP TO EAST MOORS

Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> August



A fine evening welcomed us to what was one of our unlikeliest venues of the year. A previously heavily industrialised area, this extensive patch of waste ground close to Cardiff docks had been left for nature to take its course and nature's response, with minimal intervention from humans, had been both interesting and at times, surprising.

Nature in foreground, industry background.

Close to a small patch of land that Teresa Goss had been monitoring for Plantlife for some time, a brief foray in 2009 had revealed a diversity of wildlife along with a handsome spread of autumnal orchids. Periodic visits during 2009 had generated the bones of a list of species and our field trip, with its assembled enthusiasts and experts, was intended to bestow a seal of approval on land that few present had visited before.



Getting close to nature.

Within a short distance of our parked cars we encountered Broad-leaved Helleborine, *Epipactis helleborine*, growing in the shadows of relatively immature trees planted on the border of a light industrial site. These were spread over a distance of 100 metres and

were in large numbers.

Moving onto the large, flat, central area characterised by clinker and other industrial debris, we encountered extensive swathes of Eyebright. This was identified by George Hutchinson as *Euphrasia arctica ssp. borealis* and George explained some of the key features to look for, in this instance the glandular floral leaves. Euphrasias can be particularly difficult to separate as species-formation is still ongoing.



Autumn Ladies Tresses.

We had promised a second orchid in bloom, Autumn Ladies Tresses, *Spiranthes spiralis*, but we were still taken aback at the numbers, estimating a three-figure population spread throughout the site. The plant is reported elsewhere in the vicinity, for example near County Hall and on the occasional roundabout but these often fall victim to over-zealous strimmers.

The site is also good for insects with a pot-pourri of butterflies including a Clouded Yellow and a Grayling. A survey focussing on invertebrates would undoubtedly reap

rewards. As it is our list of flora reached 140 and full details of this can be found on our website.



Grayling.

Bruce McDonald  
 Photos by Bruce McDonald  
 Species list compiled by George Hutchinson, Teresa Goss and Bruce McDonald

### **South Wales RIGS Project**

The South Wales RIGS project is a three year aggregate Levy funded project, set up to audit sites of geological interest in the South East Wales area with the aim of recommending the best to become RIGS. As RIGS these sites will hopefully be afforded some protection through the planning systems of the various councils across the region and become part of local geodiversity action plans.

The project area stretches from Kidwelly in the west to the Welsh Borders in the East and from the Severn Estuary, north to Builth Wells and Hay-on-Wye. This region takes in the main caving areas of South Wales.

“Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites – RIGS are currently considered the most important places for Earth science outside statutorily protected land such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). RIGS are identified by locally developed criteria. They are important as an educational, historical and recreational resource. The designation of RIGS is one way of recognising and therefore protecting important Earth science and landscape features for the future.” UKRIGS Handbook

The South Wales project is supported by various local organisations. These include the South Wales Geologists ‘Association, the National Museum of Wales, CCW, Fforest Fawr Geopark, Brecon Beacons National Park, The South Wales Branch of the Geological Society, Cardiff University and is being coordinated by the British Geological Survey Cardiff Office.

We are organising literature searches and talking to people with local knowledge to find potential RIGS. We will then be trying to visit all the sites to see what still exists. Sites are then reviewed by panels of experts to assess their potential as RIGS, selected for their scientific, educational, historical and aesthetic values.

General information about RIGS is available from the UK RIGS website: [www.ukrigs.org.uk](http://www.ukrigs.org.uk) whilst the South Wales RIGS group can be found at: [www.SWRIGS.org.uk](http://www.SWRIGS.org.uk)

Continued page 10

If you think you would like to get involved or would like to know more about the project, please get in touch via the BGS office in Cardiff and ask for Rhian Kendall.

Rhian Kendall

---

### **Wildlife Watching in the Slow Lane**

This is Mary Gillham's latest book and it tells the tale of the last 12 months or so. The book is a story of explorations of new and old environments, many of which we have explored with her. It's also her story of transitioning from her globe-trotting escapades from her base, part way up Garth Mountain to a more local lifestyle from her new base in Radyr

As many of you know Mary well I won't waste time extolling the virtues you will already know her for, but suffice to say her latest book retains the charm of seeing her continued sense of wonder in the natural World, some lovely drawings and plenty of pertinent and interesting information. She's been everywhere and seen everything and I wish I had half her energy at 1/2 her age! (sorry Mary I'm more than 1/2 your age now so I claim I have less excuse than I used to).

Suffice to say it's a cracking good read and you may even find a word or 2 about yourselves as we've been lucky enough between us to share many of her adventures.

It can be obtained through Amazon, and the publishers say that it will be available through Borders, Waterstones and WH Smiths, but of course the best place to get it is direct from Mary at one of our meetings where you can usually pick up a signed copy for a slightly reduced price.

Paperback: 432 pages  
Publisher: Ryelands Publishing (28 Sep 2009)  
ISBN-10: 1906551189

Andy Kendall

FIELD TRIP TO OXWICH  
Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> September



This time we made it! In 2008 we had reluctantly cancelled our rockpool ramble to Oxwich with the forecast being of dire weather and, in the event, the meteorologists were correct. On this occasion we were fortunate with fair weather, a very low tide and the usual informed and entertaining guidance of our marine polymath, Moreton Jenkins.

Moreton Jenkins and members.

Many would argue that Oxwich is a jewel in the crown of South Wales. The geology reveals Carboniferous Limestone with some Millstone Grit shales. It has a castle, mainly 16th century but with some fragments of an earlier structure along with the remains of a columbarium. The little church of St Iltyd is 13<sup>th</sup> century, supposedly sited on land used for religious purposes since the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The 3 mile stretch of sandy beach is an attraction in its own right and behind this is the National Nature Reserve which we explored in 2008 and were almost overwhelmed with the diversity of wildlife we encountered (see Newsletter Issue 79, November 2008).

This time it was the marine life that we were due to seek out as a small but enthusiastic group assembled by the large building known as the Coal House, used in the past to store coal which had been brought into the bay by sea. In our enthusiasm we were somewhat early with the tide not long having turned, so some went to enjoy a civilised cup of coffee at the nearby hotel and others sampled the beachcombing possibilities. Suitably refreshed, we made a start. Rockpool rambles are ideal for all ages so it was disappointing that no children had joined us but, there again, we started with some fornication so, maybe, it was no bad thing. As Moreton explained, the word derives from the Latin '*fornix*' meaning a vault or archway and it was in the vaults beneath Rome that ladies of easy virtue could be procured. If this seems far removed from the worthies assembled here diligently pursuing scientific enquiry, the missing link is the Slipper Limpet, an example of a non-native species, unknown until towards the end of the nineteenth century,

and now widespread around Britain's shores. Still puzzled? The Latin for the American Slipper Limpet is *Crepidula fornicata*, and if you really wanted to know quite why it is so called, well, you should have come on the field trip!

Working our way down the shore Moreton pointed out the lichen zonation; the lowest being coloured black, the next orange and the highest, grey. Most lichens here grow on the hard acid rocks such as granites and sandstones although calcareous rocks can support a very varied lichen flora up to the spray zone. We were soon foraging in the rockpools which, on a low tide like the one we had that day, extended over a long distance and revealed successive layers of fauna and flora until eventually we were well into the Kelp beds. A quick glance in a rockpool usually reveals a few obvious residents such as shrimps, periwinkles and small fish but the gems are usually only revealed when the rocks are turned over. However, Moreton stressed how important it was to replace the rock as closely to its original position as possible or the exposure will damage or kill the associated wildlife.



Common Starfish.



Cushion Star.

The range and diversity of species that we encountered in the pools were amazing – far too many to be listed here but a few are worth singling out for comment. Starfish were abundant with some rocks covered in them – the photo shows numbers of Common Starfish, *Asterias rubens*, the collective noun for which is ?? - see end of article for answer. But they were not the only species with Brittle Stars and Cushion Stars also turning up. A variety of fish species were marshalled into corners where they could be examined and these included Pipefish, in the same family as Seahorses; Butterfish that were as slippery as their name suggests and Gobys. Beadlet Anemones,

*Actinia equina*, were ubiquitous but we also encountered less common species such as the Snakelocks Anemone, *Anemonia viridis*. (see cover photo Ed.) This is found on western and southern shores of Britain and down as far as the Mediterranean and one should resist the temptation to caress the tentacles as they can cause a rash which can last as long as a month.



Velvet Swimming Crab.



Broad Clawed Porcelain Crab



Tricia and Trial by Lobster

Crustaceans were equally determined not to be ignored and the Velvet Swimming Crabs, also known as Devil Crabs, *Necora puber*, with their bright red eyes and reputation for ferocity were quite happy to take on the massed ranks of Cardiff Nats members and give us a piece of their minds. Edible Crabs, *Cancer pagurus*, turned up regularly although none would have made much of a meal. There were many other more diminutive species such as the Broad Clawed Porcelain Crab, *Porcellana platycheles*, and the Masked Crab, *Corystes cassivelaunus*, this latter species more common in sandy stretches than the rockpools. Lobsters were of a more temptingly edible size and it can be noted that

a rite of passage for Presidents or Past-Presidents of the Society is 'Trial by Lobster' where the beast is held whilst it menacingly attempts to take chunks out of your hand. The requirement is to keep smiling throughout – a test that Tricia passed with flying colours.



Unkown



Unknown

We had sponges of the family *Suberitidae*, Blue-rayed Limpets, *Helcion pellucidum*, clinging to the massive fronds of Kelp, and objects star-shaped or looking like pinnacles (see photos above) which have yet to be identified. If you think you can help with these two, please drop a line to the newsletter.

Of great interest and hitherto unseen by most members present were live examples of Crinoids, also known as Feather-stars and Sea-lilies, with the word Crinoid deriving from the Greek *krinon* ('lily') and *eidōs* ('form'). They are found both in shallow water and depths of up to 6,000 metres. Whilst the photo does little justice to these filter



Live Crinoid



Pentacrinites, a fossilised crinoid.

feeders when they are submerged with arms waving in the currents, many of us will have seen the fossilised remains of Crinoids along the Glamorgan coast, typically the 'Polo mint' shaped cross-sections of the arms. In Northumberland these used to be made up into necklaces and rosaries and were known as St Cuthbert's Beads. A fine example of the

Crinoid *Pentacrinites* was found on one of Tom Sharpe's field trips south-east of Dunraven Bay, uncommon in that it revealed the fully-articulated Crinoid with hold-fast at the bottom and stem and arms above – usually, only individual segments are found. Crinoids have been around since the Ordovician period.

So Oxwich again provided a cornucopia of interest thanks to fair weather, a very low tide and Moreton's ability to bring the shore to life.

ANSWER – the collective noun for Starfish is a Constellation.

Bruce McDonald  
Photos by Bruce McDonald



Goby

---

#### OBITUARY

Members will be sorry to learn that John Zehetmayr passed away recently at the age of 87. Although he was not a member of CNS he shared the same interest as, and was closely linked with ourselves, and as warden of the Wildlife Trust's Lavernock Reserve he conducted groups from CNS around the site on a number of occasions, when his enthusiasm and energy were much in evidence. He will be missed by all the groups with which he was involved.

Ed.

