

CNS



CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Founded 1867

NEWSLETTER NO.70

JUNE 2006

Charity No 1092496
www.cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

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Cover photo White Ibis taken by Mary Thelwall in Florida



Meeting Structure:

- Members own slides or digital images (30 mins approx)
- Technical Tips related to main presentation (15 mins approx)
- Tea or Coffee and Biscuits (30 mins approx)
- Main Speaker: titles given below with dates (45 mins approx)

Wednesday 13th September 2006:

- **Paul Bowden – Birds of Southern Europe (Italy, France, Spain and Portugal)**

Wednesday 11th October 2006:

- **Joyce and Terry Hoy – Wildlife Safari in Tanzania**

Wednesday 8th November 2006:

- **Richard Marks – Coed-y-Bwl “30 years of Woodland Management”**

Wednesday 13th December 2006:

- **Graham Duff – Lesvos in May**

Programme for January to May 2007 will be announced in October.

Contact details and further information from:

Paul Bowden: 029-2081-3044 or [Bowden@cf.ac.uk]

Graham Duff: 029-2023-2622

Presidential Amblings – June 2006.

A recent trip to the French Pyrenees causes me to reflect on the differences between our two areas. Although maybe small in number compared to our population those of us interested in natural history – and even those who are not members of a society like ours may count themselves as interested – have a limited amount of flora and fauna as compared to an area – not that far away in a global sense - such as the French Pyrenees – where unfortunately the interest in environmental matters is not as intense.

Thus we could marvel at the number of types of gentians we could identify – yes even I may ‘get into’ Alpine flowers – I’m planning on purchasing the Collins guide – and just appreciate those flowers we could not identify – I must get that book!

My friends who we went to visit moved to the Pyrenees a few years ago – my college friend tempted there after doing an MSc on a species of butterfly from the area. With his contacts we were guided to nest sites for Lammergeier and Egyptian vulture and had good sightings of Griffon vultures. I was pleased also to find both Lammergeier and Griffon vultures on a visit to another site where we were told the chances were good - it’s always satisfying to find your own.

Butterflies and orchids were both in tremendous numbers – yes the sun did shine there in May! Orchids we saw included fly, lady, butterfly and bee. Butterflies - many blues and we had my friend’s expert guidance to point out the differences of all those dots on the underside. Also I thought a Grizzled Skipper was just a Grizzled Skipper – there are loads of variations! One of the entomological highlights was finding a perfect Green Hairstreak female egg -laying.

The locals can be tolerant if not amazed by such sites but not so regarding recently introduced Brown bears. Unfortunately we found a number of ‘Non Aux Ours’- ‘No to the Bears’ graffited along the roadside. A badly organised reintroduction programme i.e. local people were not fully consulted and reassured, and the unfortunate movement of the bears from the reintroduction site to a valley they obviously prefer

has fuelled opposition and fear. Plus a habituated male whose mother was shot causes some havoc around human habitation and adds to the propaganda of the 'antis'. However I am not convinced that the British public would be any more tolerant. Much of the large numbers of flora and fauna that we found was due to the low population and space for wildlife that France can offer – hopefully these may be the factors that can secure the safety and continued presence of Brown bears in the Pyrenees also.

Patricia Wood.

Field Meetings June to September 2006.

Sunday June 18th. Skomer Island.
Start time 7.00am. Packed lunch.

PLEASE NOTE EARLIER START TIME.

Please contact me directly as this coach trip is now fully booked to see if there are any cancellations. We have decided to leave earlier as we are unable to book the boat and it will be first come first on the island – you can catch up on sleep on the coach! The coach will be picking up outside the school in Peline Road in Whitchurch ONLY. The costs for the boat will be £8 per person plus a landing fee of £6 (members of WWSWT pay £3 but must show their membership cards – contact Tondu if you don't have one). We will have alternate plans for the day if we are not able to go across to the island. We would expect to be back in Cardiff around 7.00 pm.

Wednesday June 28th. Aberthaw.
Start time 7.00 pm..

Meet in the carpark of the Blue Anchor public house in East Aberthaw village, ST 035 665. Take the A4050 from Culverhouse Cross, Cardiff towards Barry. Stay on this road, which becomes the A4226, following signs to Rhoose Airport. When approaching the airport continue around the north side on the B4265 towards LLanwit Major for approximately 2 miles then take a left turning sign posted for East Aberthaw. The Blue Anchor is on your left after half a mile. Use the carpark on the right. Rob and Linda Nottage will be our guides for this evening stroll around an area they know well. The cliffs, saltmarsh, sand dune and pebble beach form part of the East Aberthaw Coast SSSI.

tend. Currently, annual membership is only £5-00 and we charge members £1-00 for each meeting attended (£2-00 for non-members) to cover the cost of refreshments and hire of the facilities.

The subjects and formats covered by the group vary and encompass digital video presentations and still images in digital, slide or print format. Presentation subjects include birds, animals, butterflies, dragonflies and other insects, flowers and landscapes. Some talks focus on trips to particular places (Galapagos, USA, Costa Rica, Greece) and cover several aspects of the wildlife seen.

The programme for September to December 2006 is detailed below and we hope some of you will find time to attend. We both hope that a good number of new members will consider joining the club. The meetings have always been very enjoyable events and we hope to build on previous successes to the satisfaction and pleasure of all concerned.

Thank you for your support,

Paul and Graham.

Programme (September - December 2006)

Meetings will take place in the Village Hall (Reading Room), Bonvilston, Cowbridge beginning at 7:30 pm until 9:30 pm.



Glamorgan Wildlife Photographic Club



The Wildlife Photographic Group had a very successful 2005-2006 season with excellent presentations by members and guests together with an opportunity for two short presentations from members per meeting. This format was endorsed by those attending and will be retained for next year's programme. The group is no longer an Associate Member of the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales and has been renamed the "Glamorgan Wildlife Photographic Club". Meetings for 2006-2007 will be held in the Village Hall (Reading Rooms) opposite the Village Shop in Bonvilston (access via A48 between Cardiff and Cowbridge). The meetings will continue to be on the second Wednesday of the month from 7:30 pm until 9:30 pm. The programme will run from September through to May.

Graham Duff and Paul Bowden have volunteered to jointly run the group for another year and they will be helped by Margaret and John Samuels (responsible for the catering).

The group has almost 60 members and generally 15-20 attend the meetings on a regular basis. We are hoping to expand the membership over the coming year and would encourage members of Cardiff NATS to at-

Saturday July 22nd.
Start time 6.00 pm.

Barbecue at Cwmcarn.

PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN FOOD TO COOK.
PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE AND START TIME

Part of the 4,000 hectare Ebbw Forest, Cwmcarn is in the midst of beautiful forest scenery together with magnificent views of the surrounding counties of England and Wales. There are a number of walks or a seven mile forest drive for those who arrive earlier, otherwise meet at the barbecue site nearest to the visitor centre where the barbecue will be ready to start cooking. Please note that the gates will be closed at 9.00pm hence our earlier start time.(ST225936)

Sunday July 23rd.
Start time 2.30 pm.

River Taff.

The second of our public walks will be a leisurely stroll along the banks of the River Taff, stopping along the way to look at the birds, insects and plants in the adjacent woodlands and grasslands, plus in the river itself.

Meet in the car park next to the ambulance station on North Road, Blackweir. (ST 175 775)

Saturday August 12th.
Start time 10.30 am.

Comeston/Lavernock.
Packed lunch.

A return visit with Jeff Curtis to Cosmeston with its variety of habitats covering over 100 hectares of land and water, some 46 hectares being SSSI designated, protecting the rare and diverse plant and animal species. For the second part of the day we will move a short distance to Lavernock Point – a Wildlife Trust reserve which consists of unimproved meadow and cliff top bearing a mosaic of fine unimproved grassland and scrub along the Jurassic limestone coast.

Meet at the visitors centre at Cosmeston Lakes Country Park, Penarth.

Sunday September 10th.
Start time 10.30am.

Newport Wetlands.
Packed lunch.

Another return visit to a popular site especially in the autumn. As before we will start at the reserve carpark at Nash for a walk around the reedbeds and coast before going over to the scrape areas at Goldcliff. To reach the reserve leave the M4 at junction 24 and take the A445 towards Llanwern. Follow signs to Pye Corner and Nash at the roundabouts on this road. There is a signed right hand turn towards the reserve when you are approximately 2 miles from the reserve. The carpark is on the left just before the power station entrance. (ST 333 834)

For all field trips it is expected that members will have read and agree to comply with the Field Meetings Safety Code. It is useful to know who is coming on the trip especially if you are willing to give a lift to those without transport. Please contact me if you need a lift and hopefully I can arrange one. Contributions towards drivers' petrol are appreciated.

Patricia Wood 20, Dryden Road, Penarth, CF64 2RT.

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 029 20450008(fax)

Email cardiff.svs@pdsa.org.uk please note
change of Email address

Copy for the September Newsletter
By 15th August please
Ed

A yew tunnel was the first feature Graham showed us. Of great interest in itself, it contained a large number of nesting birds, which proved something of a distraction to some members. We moved on to view an archery butt of uncertain age, followed by the cloistered garden, a unique survivor from Jacobean times.

The pond garden proved very interesting, and also very attractive to wildlife. We then took a small detour to allow Graham to show us some of the orchids he is planning to plant out (including a Lady's Slipper he had bought in Holland). Moving on through the walled garden, and kitchen garden, we took a detour into the house to avoid a shower, and also to view Graham's ninfarium, an indoor garden containing rare and interesting ferns and related plants.

We moved on through the wooded walks, which were absolutely at their best, and looked at the aviaries, which are in the process of being restored following a generous and unexpected donation from a benefactor. Graham has decided to fill the aviaries with choice fruit trees, which he can defend against marauding bullfinches, having been the victim of raids during early Spring. We returned to the house, where Graham took his leave, abandoning the group to the temptations of the Spring Fayre, plant sale area and restaurant.

A really interesting visit, and well worth the long drive.

Species list (rather incomplete I'm afraid)
Early purple orchid
Spotted Flycatcher
Red kite
? Don't know if anyone else kept a proper list.

Chris Price

Aberglasney Gardens 13th May 2006

Aberglasney Gardens are the subject of an exciting restoration project, having been rescued from dereliction over the past few years. The gardens are located in the Towy river valley area, not far from Llandeilo.

After an early start, a group of 10 met Graham Rankin, our guide for the morning for a 10am start. Stiff competition from Andy and Rhian's wedding (not to mention the FA Cup final) didn't do anything to improve the turnout.

Graham Rankin described himself as head gardener. As well as being a knowledgeable and informative guide, he is clearly a major driving force behind the project.

Before going into the gardens themselves, Graham pointed out a number of early purple orchids adjacent to the car park.

Entering the gardens, the house itself is very impressive, with 2 aspects restored, giving a fine backdrop to the gardens themselves. The house is now watertight, allowing further restoration work to be undertaken in the future.



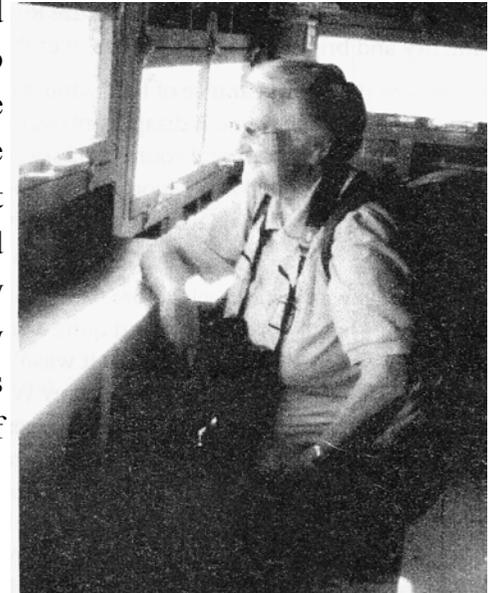
The following was written by Joy Lyman and published in the RSPB Newsletter, it is reprinted in our Newsletter with Joy's permission and our thanks to Joy. Many of the comments made by Joy are just as true with her involvement with the Cardiff Naturalists' Society. She will be missed by all of our members who knew her.

Ed .

Mary Thelwall

Many of you will have known Mary Thelwall, one of our members, who passed away after a short illness at the end of November. She was a very active member of the group, enjoying her birdwatching and sharing her interest with every one she met. She travelled to many parts of the world enjoying birds and wildlife and brought back many pictures to share with us at recent AGMs. She gave very generously of her time and was willing to lend a hand at all group events including all fund raising activities. She will be sorely missed by many people especially the committee who could always turn to her when another pair of hands was needed.

Joy Lyman



ELY VALLEY DEVELOPMENTS IN CARDIFF

The Taff Trail is such an asset to the city that Cardiff County Council staff are leading a project to improve access along the capital's other two rivers, starting with the Ely. In July 2005 and March 2006, I attended River Ely Action Plan Workshops on behalf of CNS. Many other organisations including CCW, Coed Cymru, local angling clubs and Ramblers Association are represented. The Vale of Glamorgan Council is also involved since the river forms the local authority boundary in its lower reaches and flows into the city from the Vale to the west of St. Fagans.

I suggested that our Society's most useful contribution to the project would be in gathering data on the flora and fauna of the river valley in Cardiff.

At the most recent workshop, I learned that a cycle/footpath had already been instated between Leckwith Bridge and Penarth Road, with unofficial paths through Leckwith Woods and beside the river near Trelai Park. Further upstream, work is also in progress on a track to link Bwlch Road, Fairwater with St. Fagans.

Fired with enthusiasm to explore these new (for us) localities, Rob and I spent several hours on 23 March walking from Trelai Park playing fields through Leckwith Woods and along the new track to Penarth Road.



It is necessary to disregard the appalling amount of litter and the traffic noise from the A4232 in order to enjoy a surprising diversity of wildlife. The long cold spell has held back spring flowers but we found plenty of Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage in the woods together with leaves of Bluebell, Woodruff, Moschatel and Ramsons. Most striking was the

abundance of Scarlet Elfcup fungi dotted around the woodland floor and

lower farm entrance to the river boasted glowing patches of celandines throughout. These are usually earlier than others, easily beating the daffodils to St. David's day this year. 2006 has been a poor season for winter heliotrope flowers, the few below the M4 river crossing collapsed by now into the spreading ground cover of circular leaves.

Two mornings later I walked by the lower Taffs Well stretch of the river. My first glimpse of the resident mallards and moorhens as I scrunched over the newly felled Japanese knotweed canes embraced a drake goosander, no less. This one was diving in the approved manner and it was a joy to watch its passage through the crystal clear water only a few feet below the surface. Bright orange-red feet pushed the water back independently as it 'sculled under the stern'.

The streamlined body, with wings tucked neatly into the sides was a deal more graceful than the puffins I had watched nine months earlier, rowing along below the waves with stubby wings, their orange-red feet quite as capable but used only as rudders.

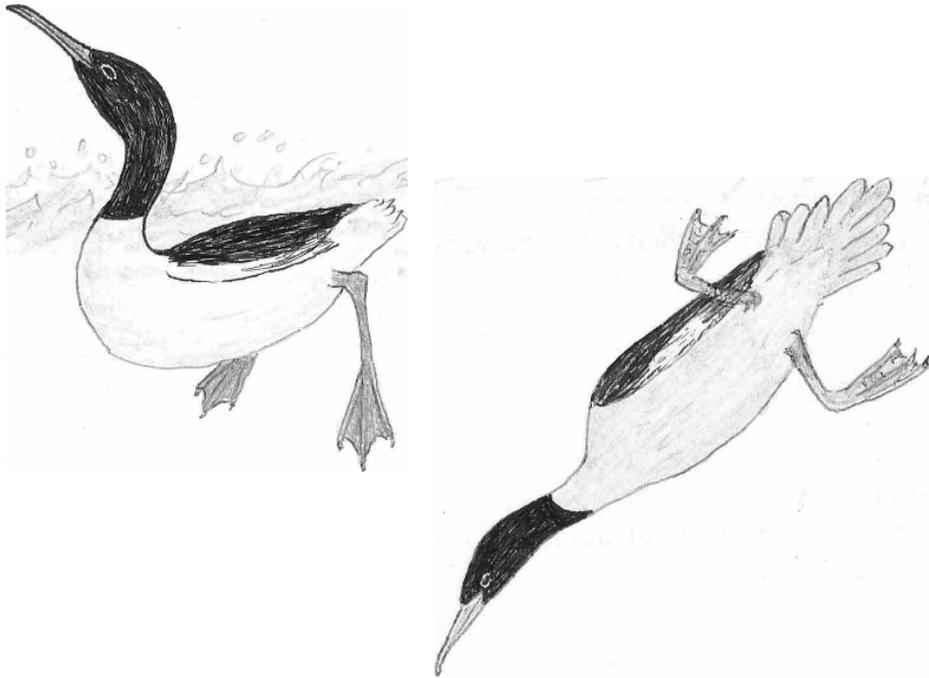
There may have been fish around because a little grebe drifted into the picture, diving alongside. Even that almost spherical brown ball of wet fluff was visible as it sped through its underwater world, holding the long lobed toes together to power it along, like an outboard motor mounted aft.

Gazing upstream from the footbridge crossing below Gwaelod-y-Garth almost a fortnight later, on 18th March, I spotted the drake again in company with a few mallard. He was on a concentrated fishing spree, the big red feet working nineteen to the dozen under the tail like mechanised pistons as he fought a current spawned by the Brecon Beacons snow melt. Also present in January, the goosanders were here for the winter.

Having known the Taff in the bad old days of drifting coal dust and sewage fungi, it is gratifying to be able to witness such spectacles now in its clear depths. A pity that nothing can be done about the polythene and other debris filtered from the floods by bordering trees!

MARY E GILLHAM

takers were blue and great tits, blackbirds, robins and dunnocks, one of the latter in full song, as complex as that of the irrepressible robins, with their martial breasts at full stretch.



As I scrambled up the bank under one of the big old oaks to the field reseeded a few years ago, three rabbits scuttled into their burrows. The turf was pock-marked with the frost-hardened imprints of cloven-hoofed cattle and iron-spiked tractor wheels. The last were responsible for four rows of dung heaps waiting to be flung around with dung forks - as in the less mechanised days of the 1940s by the look of it.

Redwings and a lone missel thrush were foraging in the next field. Five magpies and two crows were turning over straw piles in the horse paddocks across the river. I followed along the sturdy field banks topped by hedges, formerly laid but now mechanically shorn into a solid block of thorniness., looking for primroses, as I do every spring. I found plenty of primrose plants, but no blooms yet.

So far the only flowers seen were the blue and white ones of field speedwell (*Veronica persica*), but the banks of the lane leading from the

the more sombre nodules of King Alfred's Cakes on Ash trunks and branches. We were lucky enough to flush a Woodcock and to observe Marsh Tit, Treecreeper and Goldcrest as well as many commoner birds.

Along the river itself there was a varied selection of waterbirds including Heron, Cormorant, Moorhen, Kingfisher and Grey Wagtail. Three pairs of Mute Swans were behaving territorially on the lower stretches where there were also several Dabchicks and Great Crested Grebes including a displaying pair of the latter. Mallard pairs were well-distributed along the river and the Teal count was into double figures.



Dead heads of Teasel and Evening Primrose along the banks promise colourful flowers to be identified and enjoyed later in the year. Who knows what else may be growing on patches of calcareous grassland? Unfortunately there are also dense stands of Japanese Knotweed in places. Pinpointing these patches and the presence of other aliens such as Himalayan Balsam would also provide useful information to help the authorities tackle these invasive species.

Please support this project by taking careful note of the What, Where and When of all wildlife you identify in the Ely corridor. Pass the data to Laura Palmer of Cardiff County Council at lpalmer@cardiff.gov.uk. Matt Hamilton of VoG Council at mjhamilton@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk or Tricia or me to pass on. Laura is also keen to encourage offers of help from anyone who is able to carry out grassland plant surveys. If you have botanical (or any other biological) expertise, please put your skills to good use for the benefit of local wildlife and the reputation of CNS.

Linda Nottage

PARC PENALLTA APRIL 9th 2006

Twelve members and two and three quarters dogs (one dog was a front leg amputee abandoned at my work) met Simon Greenfield, Caerphilly Countryside warden for our guided walk around the newly developed Parc Penallta. After our introduction Simon took us first to the highest point of the park. We passed a number of sand blasted stones of local pennant stone from nearby Gelligaer quarry – which had text written on them forming ‘stone stories’ of life in Penallta colliery. At the highest – also the windiest and coldest point – is the High Point Observatory – each of its ten stainless steel arms pointing towards communities that surround the park. We then went down to a viewing point passing a wood sculpture of a hare representing the wild life in Parc Penallta. From this viewpoint which looks over the events arena we could make out the outline of ‘Sultan’.



This is the UK’s largest figurative earth sculpture of a pit pony – named ‘Sultan’ after one of the former pit ponies from the area. The 200 metre long and 15 metre high sculpture acts as a wind break for the events area.

The area we were walking on was of poor grassland being on the reclaimed coal tip area – coal spoil being very evident. However the park itself had a number of diverse habitats.

We walked down to another viewing area to see where we would be walking which included a woodland area. From this viewing area we walked onto an upland grass area and by some old ruins probably of an old farm building. Here green woodpecker was heard and seen by some. From here we walked through an area of bracken to Penallta rocks, a rocky outcrop which gave good views over the adjacent business park, council offices and Ystrad Mynach and also the new road route which we had taken to get to the park. Though an area used for rock climbing and abseiling none of us decided to try either of these activities!

From here we walked down and along part of National Cycle Route 47 which goes along the southern border of the park. We made a short detour into some woodland through an area which was good for finding

conspicuous white wing patches and repeating the manouvre again and again. Often they drifted down tail first, keeping an eye on any current-borne debris coming down with them.

No rain in past weeks meant no suspended silt and the stony river bed was clearly visible, but I saw no fish, nor did I see any of these diving ducks dive. On my return two hours later, the short escape flights when I came alongside were always headed upstream, barely inches above the water.

My last special duck sighting had been of an equally colourful Carolina wood drake on the Whitchurch Canal in January, a free-winged vagrant from who knows where?

Two passing cormorants wore the half crown sized white spot on each flank that characterises the early part of the breeding season, having often disappeared by June. The heron flying upstream, neck retracted and legs extended, travelled only a few yards above the river, but not low enough to displace the grey wagtail that, for some reason best known to itself, kept pace a few feet below and but a few feet above the water. It seemed an incongruous coupling.

Mostly these lesser birds were in pairs and were present almost throughout, suggesting that I was moving from each territory into the next. A lone pied wagtail perched on a stone in the shallows, peering into the passing flood as though to emulate the dipper and make an entry. Two collared doves and a wood pigeon alighted to drink at the riverside, handier puddles being frozen. The Iron Bridge crossing yielded no kingfishers, only a cronking moorhen, a little grebe and the flash of white on the rump of a jay crossing the river.

Two waterside goldcrests ignored me, searching busily along the branches of elder and hawthorn and moving just ahead of my gentle amble. Not mingling with the tit flocks was a single cole tit, working its way methodically up an oak trunk like a tree creeper. The real tree creeper appeared later, just after the pair of bud-dismembering bullfinches and some chaffinches among newly opened pussy willow catkins.

In years past food was put out at the end of the footbridge for a black cat, now it was for the birds - on the stone balustrade to either side. Chief

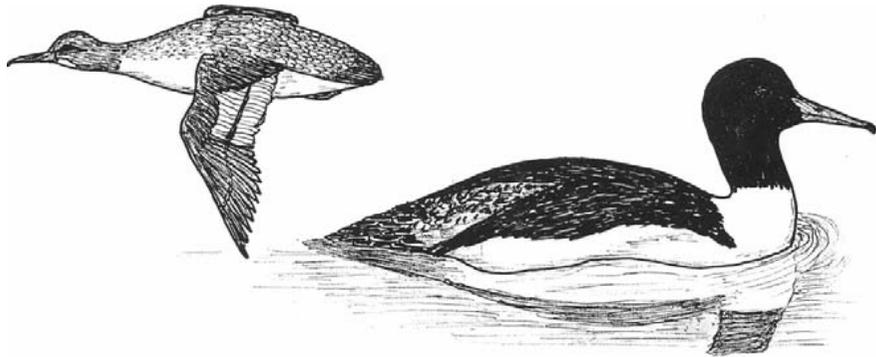
A WINTER STROLL BY THE TAFF

March 4th was one of the succession of frigid days with blue sky and sunshine that typified the long drawn out passage of winter into spring in 2006 - which was said to have been the coldest winter for ten years and the driest for fourteen. The arctic winds that had strewn my lawn with fallen branches, had brought nightly hoar frost, augmented by the occasional flurry of snow.

Only the unquenchable pale mauve crocusses and snowdrops had dared to open their petals to the elements, the first closing them as soon as the sunshine failed and the second hanging their flexible heads - an evolutionary trait necessitated by their insistence on early spring opening.

I approached the Taff from the upstream end of Tongwynlais village, to my favourite stretch alongside the fields of Ivy House Farm. There was no otter this time and only the briefest sighting of a dipper, shooting across to the labyrinthine revetments on the Gelynis bank.

The morning's highlight was more arresting than either and was



present all morning. It was a flock of goosanders, if four drakes and three ducks could be called a flock. My attention was drawn by the startling white flanks among the generous scatter of loafing mallard. Sunlight picked out glossy green highlights on the heads of the males and brightened the more tousled orange 'topknots' of the 'redheads'.

During my outward passage they were behaving as gulls often do above Radyr Weir, floating downstream for a hundred yards or so with the current and then flying back, low over the water, flaunting the

basking lizards and green tiger beetles – to view another earth sculpture this time of a sleeping giant. From here we walked out to Penallta Marsh an area in which Marsh Fritillary butterfly had been present but had not been seen in recent years. Simon explained they were trying to improve the area which may involve some cattle grazing to try to tempt the butterflies back. We did however have a sighting of a Brimstone butterfly – first of the year for many of us- before going out onto the marsh.

From the marsh we walked to the newly created but not quite finished fishing lakes. Here we had a short rain shower but luckily this was the only rain we had all day. We continued past a more established lake which was good habitat for newts.

From here we walked up to another higher area where it is hoped to build a new visitors centre overlooking the park with easy access from the A472. We then moved down to a more sheltered site to enjoy our lunch.

After lunch we walked back to the main reclaimed area of the park and along to the main lake. Here some had their first sighting of the year of swallows flying over. We walked round and through a newly constructed willow tunnel and out to another woodland area which contained some curious deep excavations which despite being evidence of some industrial archaeology - the exact use of these holes was unknown.

This woodland site also acted as a buffer zone to the SSSI site Nelson Bog which is within the park boundary. This was an area into which we did not go as Simon described an area for which waders were woefully inadequate and a wetsuit more appropriate! However this site is important for many threatened 'bogland' species.

We then made our final ascent back up towards 'Sultan' where we all had a clamber over the sculpture, and back up towards the carpark. Many of us made a detour to see the old tramway which had been used to move the colliery spoil to the tip, before enjoying a tea or coffee kindly offered at the end of our walk.

The park had a good number of common birds, flowers included golden saxifrage, wood anemone, and cowslip – it has potential for developing into a significant park in the area.

Many thanks go to Simon for his excellent guidance once again.

Patricia Wood.

PORT EYNON – a day at the seaside!

Saturday 29TH April proved to be our first real spring day for 2006 and 20 members joined Morton Jenkins for a seashore foray at Port Eynon. We lunched in the dunes waiting for the tide to fall. As we crossed to the sand Mary pointed out some fine specimens of sea stock – *Matthiola sinuata*.

Morton reminded members of his autumn lecture to the Society when his theme was the adaptations of inhabitants of the seashore to their particular environment. The day of our visit was to give us one of the lowest tides of the year with the added benefit of an offshore wind making conditions ideal for seashore exploration. We are also fortunate because, along our coastline, we can see southern species, at the northern end of their range, which reach South Wales in the warm waters of the Gulf Stream – as well as more northern species. Our first example of a southern visitor was a snakelocks anemone at the northern end of its range as would be the cowries we saw later.

We were starting on the **upper shore or littoral fringe**. My narrative describes the species I saw, enjoyed and remembered while attached is the checklist of what I should have seen. We soon found lugworm burrows, barnacles and various coloured periwinkles. The tracks on the rocks were made by the rasping of grazing limpets. *Patella*

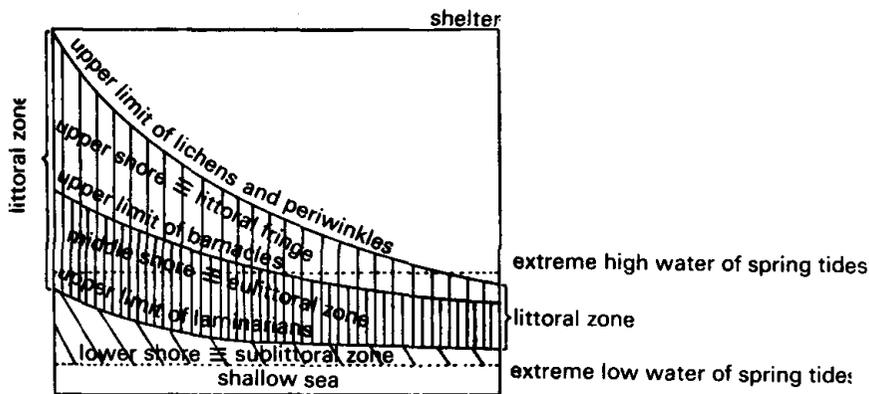


Fig. 3 Scheme of zonation on a rocky shore (After Lewis, 1964)



Empty shells of:

Ostrea edulis - oyster

Venerupis pullastra – venus shell

Ensis siliqua – razor shell

Bryozoa

Membranipora membranacea - on *Laminaria*

Electra pilosa - on *Laminaria*

Echinoderms (star fish and sea urchins)

Asterias rubens - common star fish

Ophiothrix fragilis - brittle star

Sea urchins

Psammechinus miliaris - with commensal worm *Flabelligera affinis*.

Echinocardium cordatum - burrowing sea urchin- empty test only – ‘Test’ being the name given to the exoskeleton of a sea urchin.

Tunicate - sea squirt

Ascidiella aspersa.

Fish

Scyliorhinus canicula - dog fish - egg case only

Blennius pholis - shanny

Blennius gattorugine - Tompot blenny

Pholis gunnellus - butterfish

Liparis montagui - Montagu's sea snail

Nerophis lubriciformis - worm pipe fish

Algae

Green algae

Ulva lactuca - sea lettuce

Enteromorpha intestinalis

Cladophora sp.

Brown algae

Fucus spiralis

F. vesiculosus

F. serratus

Ascophyllum nodosum

Laminaria digitata

Laminaria saccharina

Red algae

Ceramium sp

Corallina officinalis

Chondrus crispus

Lithophyllum sp.

Polysiphonia sp.

Palmaria palmata

Dumontia incrassata

Furcellaria sp

Porphyra umbilicalis

Laurencia pinnatifida

Species list for the visit to Port Eynon by Cardiff Naturalists 29/4/06 - (compiled by Morton Jenkins)

Observations made at E.L.W.S.T. (3m above Chart Datum), 14.15. B.S.T.

Porifera (Sponges)

Cliona celata - boring sponge in limestone	Hymeniacion perleve
Myxilla incrustans	Halichondria panicea

Cnidaria - Anthozoa (Sea anemones)

Actinia equina - beadlet anemone	Anemonia sulcata - snakelocks anemone
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Annelida - segmented worms

Harmothoe sp. - scale worm	Eulalia viridis - abundant green egg masses
Arenicola marina - lug worm casts abundant on sand	
Sabellaria alveolata - honey comb worm	Lanice conchilega - sand mason worm
Pomatoceros triquetter - tube worm	Laeospira sp. - spiral tube worm

Crustacea

Barnacles

Balanus crenatus	Semibalanus balanoides
Chthamalus stellatus	Verruca stroemia
	Elminius modestus

Amphipoda - sand hoppers

Marinogammarus sp.

Decapoda (crabs, prawns and crab-like crustacea)

Hippolyte varians	Palaemon sp. - prawn
Porcellana platycheles - broad clawed porcelain crab	
Porcellana longicornis - long clawed porcelain crab	
Eupagurus bernhardus - hermit crab	Cancer pagurus - edible crab
Liocarcinus puber - velvet swimming crab (devil crab)	
Carcinus maenus - common shore crab	
Xantho pilipes - VERY RARE (PROBABLY THE FIRST RECORD FOR THIS SHORE)	
Pilumnus hirtellus - Hairy crab	Macropodia rostrata - spider crab

Mollusca

Lepidochitona cinerea - chiton	Patella vulgata -common limpet
Patina pellucida - blue-rayed limpet	
Monodonta lineata - toothed top-shell - not seen since winter of 1962 further east of the Gower.	
Gibbula umbilicalis - purple top-shell	Gibbula cineraria - grey top-shell
Littorina littoralis - Flat wrinkle - egg mass on Fucus serratus	
Littorina rudis - rough wrinkle	Littorina littorea - edible wrinkle
Crepidula fornicata - American slipper limpet	Trivia monacha - cowrie
Nucella lapillus - dog whelk	Ocenebra erinacea - sting wrinkle
Buccinum undatum - common whelk	

Nudibranch molluscs

Elysia viridis - sea slug	Archidoris pseudoargus - sea lemon with egg mass
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Bivalves

Mytilus edulis - mussel	Hiatella arctica - rosey nosed borer
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vulgata – the common limpet were plentiful. Tiny beadlet sea anemones were seen – so well camouflaged when their tentacles retracted. As with the animal life – so the various plants are adapted to specific zones on a rocky coast and at this level we saw lichens and many algae including the brown spiral wrack –Fucus spiralis. All seaweeds are, in life, attached to rock.



As we reached the **middle shore** Morton was kept busy identifying finds from pools and hidden under rocks – we were careful to return all our finds to their homes.

Plants now included the red Chondrus crispus also known as Irish Moss or Carrageen and green sea lettuce – Ulva lactuca

as well as knotted wrack - Ascophyllum nodosum. Dunontia incrasata, a red worm like algae, was much admired as was another red seaweed – Laurencia pinnatifida.



We were now finding mussels and saw the tiny thread attachments by which they attach themselves to rocks – once spun to make tough gloves for knights of old.

More finds included:-

Top shells - both toothed – Monodonta lineata and purple Gibbula umbilicalis all with mother of pearl lining, The toothed top shell was nearly wiped out from our seas after the very bad winter of 1962/63 but has successfully re-established on the Gower.

The sand mason worm –Lanice conchilega – a member of the sabellids, makes a tube of sand around itself as protection from predators.

A shore crab – *Carcinus maenus* was found well camouflaged, but soon scuttled away when disturbed.

The sponge - *Myxilla incrustans*

A common blenny with teeth to eat barnacles



We had seen many dead star fish higher up on the beach and were now finding the live version - *Asterias rubens*. The live star fish were posing against a rock and could be compared with a much tinier brittle star - *Ophiothrix fragilis*

Honeycomb tube worms- *Sabellaria alveolata*

The biggest fish we were to find – about 8” long was a butterflyfish temporarily caught for photography in a useful margarine container.



Then a very active Velvet or swimming devil crab – *Liocarcinus puber* with shining red eyes and back legs modified as paddles for swimming.

Hermit crabs in other beasts’ cast off shells,

The grey top shell – *G. cineraria*

Hippolyte sp. of shrimp

Worm pipe fish – *Nerophis lubriciformis* which is related to the sea horse and is a species where the male carries the eggs.

Some rocks were inhabited by the rosy nosed rock borer or *Hiatella arctica* - when rock tapped provoked a squirt. Morton inspired Graham by saying he had never seen a photograph of the actual squirt – this challenge kept Graham busy for some time.

Even here there were aliens in the form of an American slipper limpet – *Crepidula fornicata* – which had strayed off ships’ hulls and competes

with our native oysters and mussels and is becoming a pest. They live as a chain or pile – one on top of another – undergoing a sex change – provoked varying similes in human society

A spider crab - *Macropodia rostrata* was well spotted as it looked just like seaweed.

We were now down to very low tide levels in the **sub littoral zone** – the sun glinting on the big sheets of wrack and a forest of kelp -all reflecting in the brilliant blue of the shallow sea. The kelp species included *Laminaria digitata* and *L. saccharina*.

In this zone of the sea shore were many new species:

Graephyra – Devil’s toe nail - a bivalve similar to an oyster

A handsome hairy crab - *Pilumnus hirtellus* was crowned with bits of wrack as camouflage

The blue rayed limpet – *Patina pellucida* with very vivid markings when light was right

European cowrie – *Trivia monacha* with three blotches

A rare crab found by Susan and Tom, required Morton to identify it in weighty tomes at home -later reported as *Xantho pilipes* - not previously found on the Gower.

The sea slug – *Elysia viridis*

Montagu sea snail is not a snail but actually a fish with a sucker-like pectoral fin - *Liparus Montagu*

As the tide was turning we climbed back over the slippery rocks – a freed dog Taff being entertained by Rhian and Andy. Human members had all had a splendid day and as one member said – “I’ve enjoyed rock pools from a boy but seldom learnt so much about their inhabitants”.

Our thanks to Morton for leading such an enjoyable and informative visit and my especial thanks to him for providing the check list and checking the content of this report. My thanks also to Graham Duff for providing the photographs.

I also used an ancient copy of ‘The Hamlyn Guide to the Seashore and Shallow Seas of Britain and Europe’ by AC Campbell and James Nicholls, Pub Hamlyn 1676 – from which the figure is taken.

Joan Andrews