

of Rabbits. Owing to the unseasonal weather insects were scarce despite ample nectar sources including Buddleias and Hemp Agrimony. A hawker dragonfly, one or two Meadow Brown butterflies and a Cinnabar moth caterpillar on Ragwort were all we could find but there was plenty of colour from wildflowers, mainly coarse weeds. Composites included Bristly Ox-tongue and Common Knapweed while, among the umbellifers, Wild Parsnip and Wild Carrot predominated. A few plants of Stone Parsley were a more interesting find. Members of the pea family were well-represented with Birds-foot Trefoil, Tufted Vetch, Red Clover and Goat's Rue some of the most attractive.

There were plenty of acorns on the Pedunculate Oak at the bottom of Brachdy Lane (our meeting place, although it seems the car park off Lamby Way is now open) but many were deformed as Knopper Galls. Trees and shrubs in the small enclosed plantations near the lake are prospering now that horses have been excluded. Ripening Alder 'cones' and fruits of Rowan, Guelder Rose and Dogwood in addition to hedgerow Haws and Sloes plus the seeds of abundant Docks, Teasels and Thistles promise autumn and winter bounty for birds.

The public walk introduced new people to the wildlife possibilities of Parc Tredelerch. They may wish to return to see how it develops. Everyone seemed well satisfied by the pleasant amble and grateful that it stayed dry in this saturated summer.

Linda Nottage

CNS



## CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Founded 1867

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SEPTEMBER 2007

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Cover photo Hybrid Marsh/Common Spotted Orchids  
By Linda Morris

## PUBLIC WALK at LAMBLY WAY LAKE – SUNDAY 19th AUGUST

With low grey clouds and a chilly north-westerly wind it was hardly the hoped-for summery afternoon but 18 people assembled for a stroll around the lake in what is officially known as Parc Tredelerch. About half of the group were members of the public, the rest were CNS stalwarts including Dr Mary Gillham who explained how the present freshwater lake replaced the brackish conditions of the former ox-bow of the adjacent Rhymney River. The Parc was created by Cardiff County Council in 2001 and it was encouraging to see how well the vegetation surrounding the lake has become established. Reed-beds are expanding but planted clumps of Yellow Flag, Purple Loosestrife and Flowering Rush still remain.

Bird life on the lake was rather sparse – a pair of Mute Swans with 4 well-grown cygnets, one or two skulking Moorhens, several Coot and a family of Great Crested Grebes. The lake is popular with anglers and during our morning 'recce', Rob and I watched as 2 children and their father carefully returned to the water a couple of red-finned Roach they had just caught. During our preparatory circuit of the Parc we had also enjoyed a flock of 60 Lapwings which dropped down to the muddy river-banks exposed by the falling tide. They were joined by a Grey Heron, Black-headed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls and 2 Common Sandpipers. Some of the Lapwings wheeled around during the group visit and we were also able to observe a hovering Kestrel.

No mammals were seen although there was plenty of evidence

A rather sad and sorry tale is to be told of the three of us who braved an appalling weather forecast to visit the RSPB Dinas Reserve. We had good views of red kites on the journey, near the farm close to the reserve, despite the rain. Not surprisingly we were the only car in the car park but donned our wet weather 'gear' and set off along the trail. You first enter an area of boardwalk in woodland in which there are a good number of nest boxes for pied flycatchers, unfortunately due to the conditions none were visible in the area. We did manage views of some other woodland species – plenty of robins both adult and juvenile, good numbers of tree creeper and nuthatch including a family party, chaffinch, redstart females or juveniles and a possible family of wood warblers.

We decided to go clockwise around the loop path taking the path along the river first - the expected dipper was not seen but grey wagtail was. We found lousewort growing along the path and also asphodel and wood sage. Fern species seen along the walk included lemon scented fern and beech fern.

The path then starts to wind upwards so observations became secondary to securing a good foothold along the steep and slippery path and unfortunately conditions were not improving.

At the top of the path we re-entered the woodland where one of the party had a possible fleeting view of pied flycatcher. The path led along the edge of the woodland affording views out to the field and hills overlooking the reserve. The rain became slightly lighter at this point and a buzzard was seen flying over the hills. Our bird species were increased by blackbird and great spotted woodpecker as we descended through the woodland back to the boardwalk area. We returned to the car for lunch and surprisingly another car arrived and the two occupants set out for the reserve walk which made us feel we weren't the only foolish ones. However with the weather showing no signs of improvement, as predicted, we decide to return straight after lunch- with some disappointment as we all knew what a really wonderful place the reserve could be in the right conditions.

Patricia Wood.

Whoever finalised the precise date for this year's annual BBQ most certainly has far better connections than yours truly. The afternoon of Saturday 14th July turned out to be one of the best and most sunny periods for many weeks. Fifteen of us enjoyed a late afternoon of semi tropical entertainment on and around the beach at Porthkerry followed by a selection of mouth-watering cooked and savory goodies. Quite a number of those present suggested that we should use this venue more regularly.

I wonder how many of us have, as requested, sent samples of the Harlequin ladybirds which we have found to Cambridge ? Apparently they are predicted to reach the Scottish border by Spring of next year. Incredibly, according to a recent article, the foreign invader is reported to affect nearly 1000 other living species. The Harlequin out-competes our native ladybird on a number of fronts but mainly in its voracious appetite and its reproductive speed. The scientists latest line of attack we are told, involves the controlled introduction of a virus which will render it infertile. I hope that they know what they are doing !!

New planning / building proposals were announced by the PM recently. They were a mixture of the usual vagueness and spin which we have come to expect from politicians of all shades, but seemingly involve the proposed relaxation of existing planning controls and encroachment of buildings on what are now protected areas. A large number of organisations concerned with the preservation of wildlife and the natural environment have voiced genuine concerns. We may need to

add our voice to register disapproval once the plans become more well defined and are shown to be as ill advised as we presently expect.

Roger Milton

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### EDITORIAL

It was sad news when Patricia Wood told us she was leaving us at the end of the summer. Tricia in her relatively short time with us has given us a considerable amount of her time, serving the membership and Council as Vice President, President, and currently as Immediate Past President. Tricia has also been for a number of years our Field Meetings Secretary, arranging a well balanced programme of field trips.

We will all miss her company on our trips and indoor meetings. During my time as Editor I have worked closely with Tricia, publishing the field trips and articles she has written and have appreciated her help with these, although it has been a battle “admittedly a pleasurable one” getting the material in time for publication.

Tricia we hope when you move to Northampton permanently you will be able to return to Cardiff and join us on our walks and meetings.

I know all members of CNS will join me in wishing Tricia a happy time in her new home

Brian Bond Editor

COPY FOR DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

By 15th NOVEMBER PLEASE

Ed

Perhaps the frequent cool NW winds in late April affected Gower adversely, whereas some of the normally later inland sites like Tonyrefail were more sheltered. Who knows? Anyway, we must have notched up ten or so, then passing the first "inflorescences" of the delicate and soft meadow thistle, into the shelter of the SE corner of the common, where we had views of broad bodied chasers and searched without success for narrow bodied bee hawk moth, which Richard had watched here in each of last two years. Also an earlier flier and possibly finished, although the numbers are never great. Green veined white & speckled wood showed themselves and we came across a small group of southern marsh orchid "inflorescences". While there we disturbed a juvenile fox which retreated a few yards and spent the next few minutes watching us watching it before disappearing into the undergrowth.

With weather still improving, we paid a quick visit to the sheltered western end of nearby Pengwern Common. Still no NBBHMs, but we did eventually glimpse a worn green hairstreak and a very fresh hairy dragonfly on the way back to the car. Five more fresh male marsh fritillaries were seen at close range, with photo opportunities a plenty.



Not a bad haul, from a very unpromising start.

Many thanks to Richard for compiling this report and answering all our queries on which, for us, was a personal guided tour.

Terry and Joyce.

## Rain, what rain on Gower Commons?

About 9am, on the Saturday of the field trip, the heavens opened and as far as you could see west, twas grey and fierce. Probably just about decision time, for anyone in two minds about making the trip, particularly as this was a re-run of a visit which was pretty much rained on two years ago. Anyway, no one had told the marsh fritillaries and not a drop of rain fell after the 10.30 kick off.

Joyce & Terry ventured out from the shelter of their car to meet Richard Smith, leader for the day, who reported hearing a cuckoo calling a few minutes earlier. We proceeded along the most sheltered north-eastern edge of Welsh Moor, looking among the bracken and bluebells for any sheltering insects. First of all we found Scabious Jewel Beetle larvae sitting on Devil's Bit Scabious leaves, looking just a little like undersized marsh fritillary larvae. They bite characteristic holes all over scabious leaves at this time of year, whereas most marsh fritillary larvae would now have pupated. But although many of the Gower Commons are famed for their populations of marsh fritillary of European importance, there are other creatures living on *Succisa pratense*. The habitat is traditionally maintained by a mixture of cattle & pony grazing, supplemented with occasional winter burning to reduce Purple Moor Grass (*Molinia*) litter build up

It was quite breezy but from time to time sun poked out and it wasn't long before we were rewarded with several Azure damselflies sheltering in the bracken. We had sight of a small heath, which is widely rumoured to be likely to feature on the forthcoming revised list of UK & Wales Biodiversity Priority Species. We'd hoped for green hairstreak there as well, but the superb April weather probably meant an early end to their flight season here. We noted petty-whin, lousewort, deer grass, milkwort, tormentil and several other plants characteristic of classic rhos pasture.

Crossing the road, still breezy but firstly a small copper, then we started to find fresh male marsh frits sitting in the grass and just about flying up from under our feet. This was quite amazing as several sites inland had males on the wing in early May, whereas here they were late if anything.

## **INDOOR MEETINGS – AUTUMN 2007**

The programme for the first half of 2007/2008 will start, as usual, with the Annual General Meeting, on Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> September, at 7o'clock at the U.W.I.C. Campus on Western Avenue. The meeting will be in the Speech Therapy Lecture Room, ST.04, the same venue as last year. (Our booking of the room is subject to confirmation by UWIC in September.) The formal brief meeting will be followed by a talk from our President, Roger Milton, on 'Travels in Romania'; and then some light refreshments to end the evening.

The first of the regular programme of evening talks, which will all start at 7.30pm, is on Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> October, when local pharmacist, Peter Rees, shows us the spectacular underwater photographs he has brought back from his travels to coral seas around the world. He has been enthusiastically recommended to us!

Next, on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October, a return visit by Dr. Geraint Owen of the Department of Geography at Swansea University. 'The Perilous Planet: the threat from natural hazards' will give us an insight into the increasing problems being posed to our planet's unique environment.

Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> November, brings a visit from Bob Wallis, to show us 'Spring flowers of the Levant'. This area of the eastern Mediterranean may be little known to most of us, and it will be fascinating to discover something of what it offers.

On Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> November, our fellow members, Margaret and John Samuel will give us a picture of the wildlife of Costa

Continued on page 6



Rica, an area they have much enjoyed visiting and photographing on their travels to one of the wild places of the world.

This first half of the Autumn Season will be rounded off by the Christmas Special, on Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> December. Following such enjoyable presentations from our members last year, we are offering another selection of contributions illustrating some of their wildlife experiences. This evening will be a happy social occasion with some festive cheer to leave us looking forward to the renewal of the winter indoor season on Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2008. Details will be in the December newsletter. Margaret Leishman, Indoor Meetings Secretary

#### NEWS FROM CARDIFF BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

I represented CNS at a meeting of the Partnership on 1st May at Forest Farm. An attractive leaflet about the Country Park there is now available – phone 02920 445900 for details. A larger booklet about Biodiversity in Cardiff is in preparation for a launch in the autumn.

Ideas for wildlife-enhancing projects in the city are welcome. Peregrines are using the old Raven's nest on the City Hall clock tower this year. A viewing station behind the building will be manned at times by the RSPB and nest pictures transmitted into the National Museum.

We listened to presentations from Sergeant Ian Guildford about reporting Wildlife Crime and from Ruth Mumford about **Cardiff in Bloom**.

A new category of the latter this year is for a **Wildlife Garden**. The judges will be looking for features designed to encourage birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and all kinds of mini-beasts by providing food, water and shelter as well as using native plants. Judging will take place 16-27th July. Details are available at [www.cardiff.gov.uk/bloom](http://www.cardiff.gov.uk/bloom).

Linda Nottage

Apologies to Linda this article was missed from the June newsletter I have deleted items from the article which advertised events which have now pasted.

Editor

be Roseroot but short of rock-climbing or abseiling access would have been impossible and neither were on my agenda. However a prominent outcrop of rock nearer the valley bottom presented itself as a subject worthy of closer examination and within seconds the unmistakable succulent leaves of Roseroot were apparent – usually growing from cracks in the rockface. A dozen plants were immediately obvious and being inaccessible to the sheep other plants were also flourishing with the intermingled blues of Violets and Common Butterwort, *Pinguicula vulgaris* and nearby, Mossy Saxifrage, *Saxifraga hypnoides*, was flourishing alongside a stream.



So, what is Roseroot? It is in the Stonecrop family and is found typically on coastal cliffs or mountain ledges, more common in the north of Scotland and then, coming south, Cumbria, Snowdonia and the Brecons. The

name derives from the scent of roses coming from its cut or dried roots and the plant has been used as a tonic in Europe for over three thousand years. The North American Indians fermented it to make it more palatable and you can find it in herbal shops usually referred to as Rhodiola.

If you fancy the trek out to look at Roseroot at this location the grid ref. of the easily accessible outcrop is SN 81554/21898. And, if you know your botany you might also find Lesser Meadow Rue, *Thalictrum minus*; Limestone Bedstraw, *Galium sternerii*; Limestone Fern, *Gymnocarpium robertianum* and Dwarf Willow, *Salix herbacea*.

Bruce McDonald

## In Pursuit of Roseroot

June's mission was to track down Roseroot. The Purple Saxifrage, *Saxifraga oppositifolia*, had been impressive in April found near the top of a gully in Craig Cerrig Gleisiad reserve in the Brecon Beacons but a less publicised arctic-alpine plant found in South Wales is Roseroot, *Sedum Rosea* and, now, *Rhodiola Rosea*. One clue to its location was in a report by a Bryological Society who had noted Roseroot growing near the Black Mountain – a four-figure map reference giving a vague indication of where it could be found.

I set off from near Graig-y-Nos country park following the line of the Beacons Way, a new long-distance footpath which traverses the Brecon Beacons from one side to the other. Following an obvious path (instead of using map and compass) I soon found myself at the top of the mountain instead of where I should have been, the valley bottom. This is the quietest area of the Brecon Beacons and with a varied geology. Not only is there Old Red Sandstone but large outcrops of Carboniferous Limestone and Millstone Grit and at its highest point, Fan Brycheiniog, the trig point is at over 800 metres. Ravens were abundant, performing their acrobatic routines, whilst Wheatears and Larks dominated the lower grassland.

A gully allowed access back down to the valley bottom bringing me out near a lake Llyn y Fan Fawr. Extensively grazed by sheep the flora was unsurprisingly dull. Heath Bedstraw, *Galium saxatile*, predominates with isolated yellow flashes of Tormentil, *Potentilla erecta*. Northern Bedstraw, *Galium boreale*, also occurs here – next time I'll look out for the characteristic 3-veined leaves. A Kite kept me company as I carried on towards the second lake, Llyn y Fan Fach, one of the most southerly examples of a corried lake in Britain. It was from here that the Lady of Llyn y Fan Fach emerged in Welsh folklore – these days the pulse is more likely to be set racing by the unusual Quillwort, *Isoetes lacustris* which grows on the bed of the lake.

Some 6 miles from the start I approached the foothills of Bannau Sir Gaer with its forbidding and precipitate cliffs. Somewhere up there might

## Field Meetings September to December 2007

Saturday September 15<sup>th</sup>  
Start time 10.30am

Leigh Woods  
Packed Lunch

On Bristol's doorstep, Leigh Woods offers wonderful views of the Avon Gorge, woodland sculptures and rare trees. The rare Wild Service Tree can be found here as well as the Bristol Whitebeam, found only in the Avon Gorge. The woods are largely broadleaved ancient woodland with some areas of conifers. It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Site of Nature Conservation Interest and a National Nature Reserve. Botanist and dendrologist, Tony Titchen will be guiding us around the site. Meet at the main car park on the A369, Portishead to Bristol road (ST 553741).

Saturday October 13<sup>th</sup>  
Start time 10am

Cardiff Bay  
Half-day

Cardiff Bay and Hamadryad Park are the venue for this short walk. In the company of members of the biodiversity team within Cardiff City Council, this will be an opportunity to find out about developments both in the wetlands area of the Bay and the adjacent Hamadryad Park as well as looking out for any late-flowering plants, dragonflies (if the weather is kind) and birds. Meet in the open-air public car park adjacent to St Davids Hotel. (ST 189 742)

Sunday November 18<sup>th</sup>  
Start time 8am

Bridgewater Bay  
Packed lunch

This is a joint trip with the RSPB to Bridgewater Bay and

Walborough in Somerset. Bridgewater Bay National Nature Reserve is a Special Protection Area and RAMSAR site consisting of intertidal mudflats, saltmarsh, sandflats and shingle ridges with around 190 species of birds recorded. Walborough Nature Reserve is just south of Uphill with limestone grassland and saltmarsh. The Axe estuary has good numbers of wildfowl and the birds wintering on the saltmarsh include Pipits, Linnet and Twite. As usual, please book with either Joy Lyman or me, but not both. Pick up will be at Penlline Road, Whitchurch, opposite the car park. Booking form is included with this newsletter.

Sunday January 20<sup>th</sup>  
Start time 9am

Roath Park  
Packed lunch

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

For all field trips it is expected that members will have read and agree to comply with the Field Meetings Safety Code. If you have a lift with another driver, contributions towards drivers' petrol are appreciated.

Bruce McDonald, 5 Walston Close, Wenvoe, CF5 6AS

Telephone number 02920 593394  
E-mail [bruce7@btinternet.com](mailto:bruce7@btinternet.com)



Broad leaved Hellebone

After hearing about the Badger sets on the site, amounting to 160 holes, and viewing the Heronry, we retraced our steps, finally passing through a field that had been ploughed up last year and left to naturalise with the hope of attracting Tree Sparrows, rather than Pheasants and Finches the current visitors.

Butterflies spotted during the day included Large and Small Skipper, Meadow Brown, Tortoiseshell, Common Blue, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral and Painted Lady.

Additional birds spotted included Pied Wagtail and Jay.

Linda Morris



Leaving the main reservoir we walked past a side ditch 1 metre deep, sighting the Snow Goose which has been there for 2½ years and previously bred with a Canada Goose although a Fox got the eggs. A reed mat has been put in for Wood Warblers and Reed Buntings and a Willow Warbler was heard. The hide offered cool relief from the extremely hot midday sun, giving a view of a fenced off area of the reservoir where the fish like to come and spawn. It drains slower so attracts coarse fish including last year a 30lb Pike. Pondweeds oxygenate the water and keep it clear of algae. Birds that visit include Little Grebes, Red Necked and Black Necked Grebes and Caspian tern. Although these were absent we did see Moorhens and a young Coot and a Great Crested Grebe swam out of the reeds with a fish in it's mouth.

On the return meander back through the flower meadows for lunch, an unusual double form of late flowering Cuckoo Flower was discovered. Nest boxes put up for Blue Tits were pointed out as many had been taken over by Woodmice and another by Hornets. Whilst we ate our picnic by the water's edge, our Ranger had nothing until his 'takeaway' was delivered by boat from the far end of the lake. Personal service indeed! It was baking hot living up to the BBC prediction of 27°C.

Post lunch we headed in the opposite direction stopping first at the hide overlooking the wild bird feeding station with seed feeders, fat ball, peanuts, mixed seed etc, but all was quiet apart from the odd Blue Tit. The aim of the feeding station was to increase the diversity of bird species coming to the site. We moved on up a shady path past Foxglove, Bindweed, Sow Thistle, Herb Bennett, wild Honeysuckle and Roses, emerging onto open grassland. We walked on past 2 fly fishermen and stopped to look at Broad-leaved Helleborine, 2 feet from the

## Llandegfedd Reservoir Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2007

The forecast for the day was hot and by 10:00 am when 10 of us plus canines Taff and Freddie, assembled at the Public Car Park at Llandegfedd Reservoir it was already 21°. The water was a calm expanse of blue, shimmering in the mid morning haze with cormorants drying off on a distant pontoon. Our guide for the day was Ranger Richard Poole, who led us in our cars in convoy down narrow lanes past some stunning houses, (and a very pretty and inviting pub which was luckily closed) to a car park at the far end of the water designated for permit holders only. Sadly a casualty on the way was a young Badger cub lying by the side of the lane. Richard said there was a major set nearby and the Badgers were tending to stray for food as the ground is so dry.

The day ahead promised a walk through hay meadows and fields bordering the reservoir before lunch, followed by a visit to the feeding station for wild birds, the aim being to look at the wildlife conservation projects that had been put in place. Warnings included horseflies, rats and the unisex toilets! Due to regulations banning dogs from the area Plan B was activated for Freddie and Taff, who spent the morning and afternoon together with each of their respective owners alternately.

We set off to the first hide overlooking some ponds, spotting a great crested grebe and a heron, coots with young, plus a damselfly and 3 spikes of common spotted orchid. This week-end was thought to be the best for orchids which were 2/3 weeks earlier than usual because of the recent fine weather. We then walked through the first grassland area which had been mown once, after establishing various birds were no longer nesting, and had

been a site for Snakeshead Fritillaries earlier in the year. There was a profusion of Common Spotted Orchids amongst the buttercups, Birdsfoot Trefoil, Silverleaf, and flowering grasses. An Adder/Slow-worm trap had no surprises and we saw a small beehive set up for Solitary Bees. A further pond resulted in sightings of a Broad Bodied Chaser, 2/3 Damselflies plus Ragged Robin. Tawny owls were known to nest in the area and 109 young Blue tits had been ringed this year.

### Common Spotted Orchids



We continued our walk through the meadows, yellow with flowers including Yellow Rattle, interspersed with masses of mainly Common Spotted and Heath Spotted Orchids plus more robust hybrids in varying shades of pink and some Southern Marsh Orchids. Richard explained that there is no natural water supply in the hay meadows, which utilise the water running off the hillsides. Reed warblers could be heard singing in

the man made reed beds, planted to attract both Reed and Sedge Warblers of which there are now 30/40 pairs. A sedge warbler was sighted jumping froglike between the reeds. A heron flew low over the meadow, yellow with flowers against the heat haze, whilst a buzzard spiralled on the thermals.

We emerged by the water which was flat calm with a

trail of 16 Canada Geese swimming by and a single fisherman in a small boat. The Reservoir is a mile by a mile and a half in size, and 135 foot at it's deepest point. The level can drop by around 6 inches a day and there are water management plans to reduce this amount. Continuing along the edge of the water, we passed through a field full of Goatsbeard, Buttercups, Marsh Orchids, pink and white Clover, Yellow Rattle, Sorrel, Self-heal, and included a spectacular clump of 7 spikes of Heath Spotted Orchid, pale pink with flatter petals. Grasshoppers and a frogling were seen. A platform had been erected high up on a pole in the water close to the bank to encourage Ospreys, but so far it was mainly used by Herons and Cormorants. An artificial Sand Martin bank made of planks, sand, soil and pipes had also been put in place by the water. This was it's first breeding year supporting at least 4 pairs.

Hemlock Water Dropwort was seen nearby with the Beetle *Oedemera nobilis* and later on male and female *Gastrophysa viridula* Beetles were identified mating typically on dock.



There are very limited rights of way around the Reservoir, it being more accessible to fishermen than the public and the entire site is shut between November and February. Problems are associated with access and the very narrow land area around the water which is partly owned by The Golf Club and farmers who will not agree to proposed changes.