

CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Founded 1867

NEWSLETTER No. 133

January 2025

Charity No. 1092496

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President

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Secretary

Position vacant

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Treasurer

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Membership Secretary

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Indoor Meetings Secretary

Hilary Wicks

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Field Meetings Coordinator

Position vacant

Newsletter Editor

Stephen Nottingham

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Also on Council

Mary Salter, Gill Barter, Patrizia Donovan

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

www.facebook.com/groups/CardiffNaturalists

<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.com>

The role of Secretary remains vacant. If anyone can take on this role, or at least take on the role of Minutes Secretary, this will make life easier for Mike who continues to do the Society Secretary work in addition to his role as President. Please email Mike if you can make a contribution in this area.

Cover photo: Crinoid fossils in beach pebble, Friars Point Barry, by Linda Nottage (see pages 13-17).

President's Ramble

Mike Dean

A new year means that it is time for the Cardiff Birdwatch which is being led as usual by Rob and Linda Nottage. The Society is very lucky to have two such dedicated naturalists to lead the walk and impart their wealth of knowledge to others. I should like to record our thanks to them.

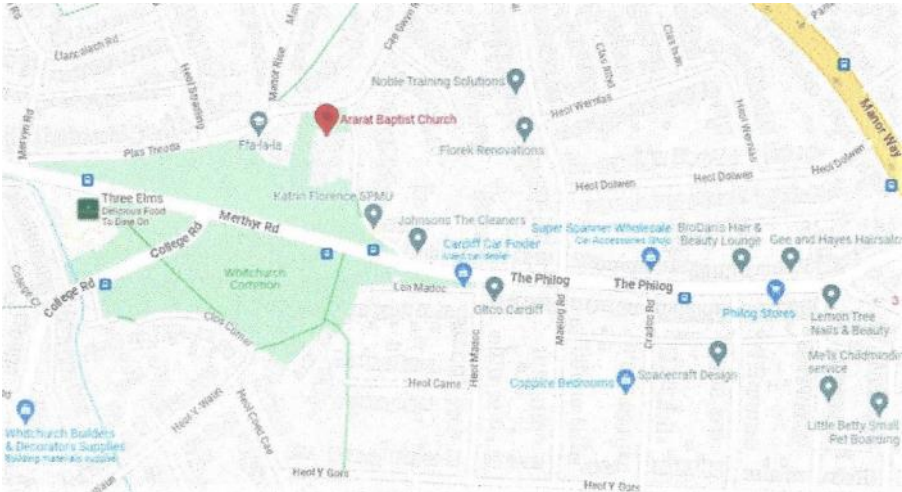
The new year also brings the RSPB's Garden Birdwatch at the end of January. It can be argued that it is not as scientifically rigorous as the surveys that are carried out by the BTO but it does provide a "snap shot" of the number and variety of birds visiting our gardens. My current impression in advance of any count, is that both numbers and varieties will be considerably down this year. The reasons are likely to be weather, disease and loss of habitat. Weather, we can do little about except by doing our little bit to minimise climate change. The spread of disease can be minimised by keeping our bird feeders scrupulously clean. In terms of habitat loss we can only turn to our politicians, administrators and planners to mitigate the effects of developments. So often politicians say the right words but don't turn the words into actions, possibly because the policies do not pass down to those responsible for implementing them.

Nevertheless, there can be considerable successes when dedicated individuals make significant commitments. For example, on a recent trip to London, I saw four red kites while driving along the M4. While in the early 2000s, CNS made a trip all the way to Gigrin Farm to see red kites being fed. Also water vole numbers are increasing in isolated pockets where habitat has been restored and mink have been eliminated. Also on islands noted in the past for breeding sea birds, breeding success has been decimated by invasive rats and stoats. Recent eradication initiatives have proved that breeding success can be restored.

We must all try to support these projects and pressure our politicians to facilitate restoration of the natural world for the benefit of future generations.

Meetings Programme

Indoor Meetings are held at Ararat Community Centre, next to Ararat Baptist Church: Plas Treoda, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF14 1PT. Meetings start at 7pm and conclude by 8.30pm.



Outdoor Meeting

Cardiff New Year Birdwatch, Cardiff Bay

Saturday 11 January 2025 at 10.00 am

Led by Linda and Rob Nottage

Meet alongside the River Taff by the Channel View Centre, Jim Driscoll Way CF11 7HB (what3words: clocks.codes.jets).

We will have a leisurely, sociable stroll around to Hamadryad Park and the Cardiff Bay Wetland Reserve.

Returning to base and, depending on the weather, after a lunch break we may move on to Penarth and further exploration of the River Ely, outer Bay and barrage area.

There will be plenty of waterfowl to check over, and if we are lucky perhaps some unusual species brought in by wintry conditions.

Indoor Meetings

Monday 27 January 2025

Members' Evening

Short presentations by CNS members.

Monday 24 February

Ben Rowson: British Slugs - Can We Forgive Them?

Dr Ben Rowson is Principal Curator: Invertebrate Biodiversity (Terrestrial Mollusca) at the National Museum Cardiff / Amgueddfa Cymru.

Monday 24 March

Katie Mortimer-Jones: The Seabed Life Around Wales and Beyond

Dr Katie Mortimer-Jones is Senior Curator: Invertebrate Biodiversity (Marine Invertebrates) at the National Museum Cardiff / Amgueddfa Cymru. She specialises in polychaete annelids, and is lead curator of an exhibition on annelid worms at the museum, called 'Wriggle: The Wonderful World of Worms'.

Monday 28 April

Speaker TBC.

Look out for the latest information and additions to the outdoor and indoor meeting programmes in emails to members, on social media, and on our website/blog:
<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.co.uk/p/programme.html>

Bioscience Prize 2024



At the meeting on Monday 23 September 2024, **Liliana Tarrant Snedden** was presented with her award for winning the Cardiff Naturalists' Society Bioscience Prize by President Mike Dean (photo above, by Andy Kendall).

This prize is awarded annually in memory of Prof Ursula Henriques to a second-year Cardiff University School of Biosciences student for their outstanding field course work.

Liliana gave a talk about her project on the effects of barrel sponge (*Xestospongia* spp.) filtration on seawater composition off the coast of Malaysian Borneo (see September 2024 newsletter for her written report).

The Morrey Salmon Project: Update

Andy Kendall

It's the end of the year so another update on the Morrey Salmon pictures project seems appropriate. It has been another challenging year, with the museum asking us to once again pause the project because of their internal staffing issues, but once again the team have weathered that storm and have made good progress.

As a reminder, there are about 3 500 Negatives, Slides and Prints being dealt with, along with a few hundred Zoological Photographic Club portfolios (sadly most missing the print that they refer to) and also many diaries that are being transcribed.

In terms of the glass plates, we estimate just less than 3 200 and we are almost there with the following process being followed:

- Cleaned and put into acid-free envelopes with any identification transcribed (about 3 100 done).
- Assigned a unique number and photographed by me to enable positives to be shared within the CNS project team (about 3 100 done).
- Using a lightbox, photograph and convert to positive (about 3 100 done).
- Identified and checked and data file created (about 2 600 done).
- Transcribe the diaries (as they are very hard to read).

The next part of the process is:

- We have recently been trained in cleaning photographic prints, and are making a good start on those.
- Scanning (Museum standard TIFF files) (500-1 000 selection as we think that will be the best use of resources).
- Scanned images entered into the museum system.
- Made available online via: <https://museum.wales/collections/online/system>
- Extracted information will be sent to the Biological Records Centre.

The whole team have been excellent, but picking out just a few, Rob Nottage is leading the data file creation aided by Linda, and Stephen Howe is leading the diary transcription work, and both these tasks are going very well.

Mike, Rob and I had a meeting with the museum recently whereby we tried to get some progress on their actions. It's hard to know when they will move forwards as there seemed to be a reluctance to give us actual dates.

Included on the following pages are some interesting pictures that have been found recently.



Great Crested Grebe on nest, Hensol.



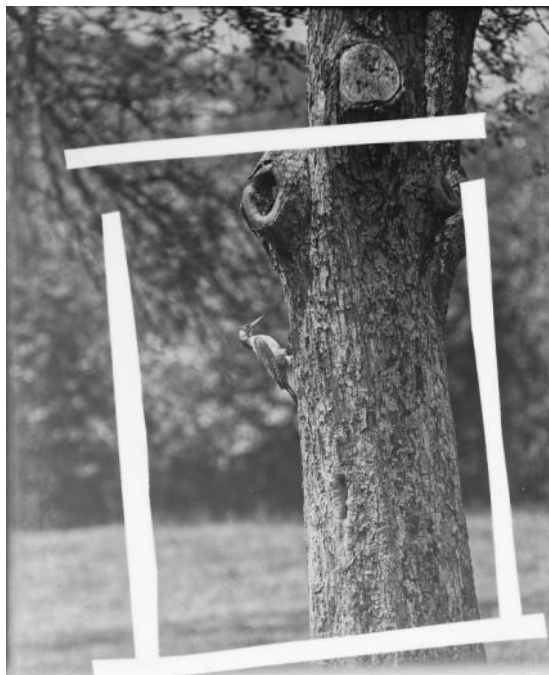
Camp at Kenfig dunes.



Swallow at nest with young (Llanedw Rhulen Rads).



Kingfisher with fish, Wild Park, Cardiff.



Green Woodpecker.



Nine Puffins.

*For further information on Col. H. Morrey Salmon (1890-1985):
<https://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/htmlfiles/150th-05.htm>*



Carrion Crow at nest, Lisvane Reservoir.



King Frederick of Bulgaria with Ronald Lockley (right) during the 1934 International Ornithological Congress (lantern slide).

Friars Point Barry: 20th October 2024

Andy Kendall

I agreed to lead this walk, but needed to find a falling tide. Picking a date far ahead was tricky given we needed low tide and the tide tables are not published in a free access format that far ahead and I was a bit concerned until Mike Dean kindly reminded me that at full and new moon the high tide times roughly come at noon and midnight so planning a walk that is on the beach a few hours after that will be on a falling tide (something I plan to remember)

It's one thing when you have to cancel an event because of an active weather warning, its quite another and you do wonder what you have done wrong when another weather warning is issued for the rescheduled date. Especially when the dates available are limited because you need a low tide for the walk. In the event the weather warning for the 20th was finishing at 12 noon and the walk not starting until 1pm so we decided to go ahead.

A small, but clearly dedicated group assembled in the car park at Friars Point having driven rough wind and in some cases driving rain, but we were pleased to see that the clouds were breaking as forecast. The walk was to follow the route of the South Wales Geologists' Association walks leaflet (<http://swga.org.uk/geological-walk-at-barry-island-friars-point>) originally written by a good friend and former colleague at the National Museum of Wales which I had the pleasure of updating with the latest names for the rock units and adding colour photographs to during 2023. I won't repeat all of the geology here as you can easily read it, but in summary it examines the fossiliferous Carboniferous Limestone Supergroup and its relationship to overlying Triassic rocks. The round trip is about 2 km and should take no more than half a day.

The first couple of locations were challenging for me as leader and for the group trying to listen to me as I bellowed information into the wind hoping that they would be able to hear at least some of it. The last straw for me was the most southerly point of the walk where I nearly lost my voice. Coming to the more sheltered eastern side I was able to recover and we discussed the fossils that can be found here (mostly on the western side where they erode out) with some examples kindly brought along by Mary Salter.

The final part of the walk took us down onto the beach where we were able to see most clearly the unconformity with the red Triassic aged rocks overlying the grey carboniferous aged limestone (now called the “Pembroke Limestone Group” not Carboniferous Limestone”). The time gap between the two was about 80 million years during which the carboniferous rocks had been solidified, lifted up above sea level and tilted and then eroded down into beaches at the edge of a large lake with finally, desert rocks to the north being eroded and brought down to lie on top of them in what is termed an unconformity. You can clearly see that the breccia is partially made up from blocks of the limestone which have not been moved very far because they have not been rounded off as they would have been if they had been washed by long river transportation or by spending a long time on the beach. This is what makes it a breccia vs a conglomerate which has rounded pebbles.

Above the breccia and in the sheltered bay overlooking Nessa's amusements and Marco's café (as I write this expecting to see them one last time in a few days) we could see the fine mudstones with the "potatoes" where soluble minerals had first concentrated and then washed out and the effect of reduction (lack of oxygen) giving some layers a green as opposed to the red colour.

In terms of wildlife we were not able to see as much as we had hoped. The sea birds were clearly sheltering somewhere else as there were almost none sighted during the walk, with even the pigeons sheltering in the Holm Oak.

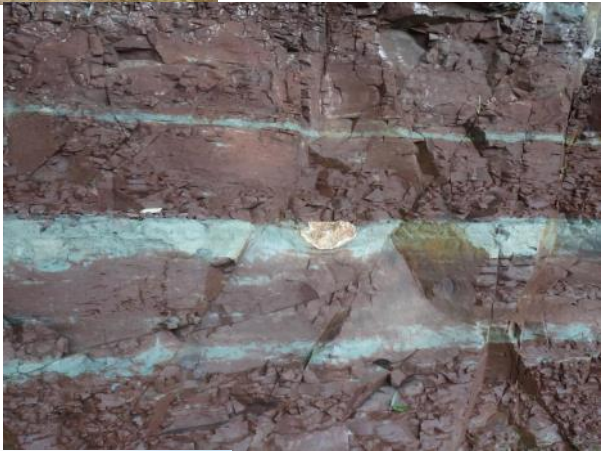


*Red Triassic breccia over grey carboniferous aged limestone
(photo by Andy Kendall)*



Braving the wind

Cliff strata, with gypsum
'potato'



Cardiff Nats group at
Watch House Bay

Photos: Linda Nottage



Holm Oak acorns and leaf gall (caused by the mite *Aceria ilicis*)

Cardiff Nats group viewing cliff strata



Wood pigeon on Holm Oak

Photos: Linda Nottage

Cosmeston Lakes Country Park

Recent developments at Cosmeston Lakes Country Park include the digging of two new ponds at the top of the Dovecot Field, the introduction of conservation grazing (low-density sheep grazing) in the grassland at the Dinas Powys end of the Park, and the inclusion of Cogan Wood in the National Forest for Wales.





Cosmeston photos by Stephen Nottingham.

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**Deadline for submissions to the next newsletter:
Friday 16 May 2025**



Smoky Spindles (*Clavaria fumosa*) at Cathays Cemetery. Photo by Phill Blanning.

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