



CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Founded 1867

NEWSLETTER No. 134

June 2025

Charity No. 1092496

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Position vacant

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Field Meetings Coordinator

Position vacant

Newsletter Editor

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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: Redshank by Linda Nottage—see pages 18-20 for the New Year's Cardiff Birdwatch report.

President's Report

Mike Dean

We have just completed what I believe to have been a successful season of Indoor Meetings. We were able to welcome several new faces at our meetings, which is encouraging for the Society. We continue to meet at the Ararat Community Centre, which is ideal in many ways, but it does mean that we must finish by 8:30 pm. However, I am yet to be aware of anywhere better that we can afford. We have started to think about the programme for next winter - any suggestions or offers to give a talk will be more than welcome.

We are organising a series of Field Trips during the summer months and have several in the planning phase, but at this stage dates cannot be confirmed, except for the one being led by Rob & Linda. The dates for others will be notified in the usual way via emails. Again, any ideas or offers to lead a trip will be well received.

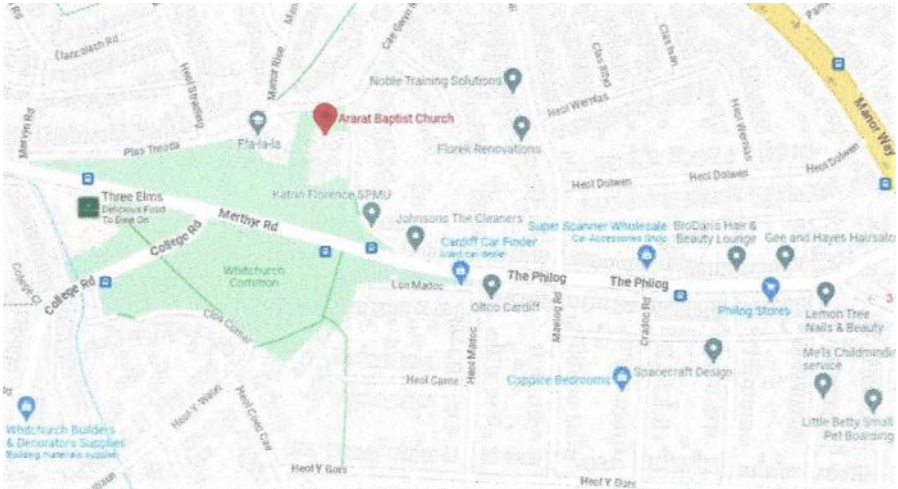
The Morrey Salmon project continues to slowly move forward and a detailed report is included by Andy in this issue. When we signed the agreement with the National Museum in January 2020, I could never have envisaged that 5 years later it would not be complete. I know there has been extenuating circumstances, but I do feel better progress could have been made with a bit of creative thinking and a willingness to get the job done on the part of the Museum.

It has been an exceptionally dry spring which gives me concern as we always seem to get a series of wildfires which devastates wildlife and even puts lives at risk. Many people put considerable efforts in to give nature a helping hand just to see it ruined. I can never decide whether these fires are due to (a) natural causes, (b) so called "controlled burns" which are no longer "controlled", or (c) deliberate arson. Natural causes cannot be controlled only mitigated but I feel we need a policy to ensure any "controlled burns" are properly organised and a "fire watch" is maintained for several hours after the exercise is complete. Also, we need a more extensive use of education to make people aware of the damage done by such fires and a more aggressive approach to catch and punish arsonists.

I shall look forward to seeing you at future events, Field Trips and the Indoor Meetings next season, and to wish you an interesting and happy summer observing our wonderful wildlife.

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.



Indoor Meetings

Indoor meetings restart in September 2025. Speakers to be confirmed for the following Mondays at Ararat Community Centre:

2025

29 September
27 October
24 November
8 December

2026

26 January
23 February
23 March
20 April

Dates for your diary

Saturday 12 July 2025

Celebration of Nature, St Fagans National Museum of History
10am to 4pm.

Cardiff Naturalists' Society will have a stall at this event. Help with minding the stall, even for a short shift, would be most welcome.

Saturday 26 July 2025—Outdoor Meeting

Hensol Forest, led by Linda and Rob Nottage

Meet at 10am in the Forestry car park north of Welsh St Donats at grid ref ST 031 768. We will have a gentle stroll (2-3 miles), mainly on the tracks and lanes through conifer plantations and broad-leaved woodland. We should find some butterflies and other insects along the way. Particular features to explore are the picturesque lake, Pysgodlyn, and the area of redeveloping heathland on a cleared plantation site.

Saturday 11 October 2025

Unknown Wales Conference

Usually 10am to 3.30pm (tbc)

Cardiff Naturalists' Society will be giving a presentation on the Morrey Salmon Project at this year's Unknown Wales Conference.

Friday 7 November 2025

Botany Department, National Museum Cardiff

Dr Heather Pardoe will give us a tour of the Botany section, with reference to the work of Eleanor Vachell (1879-1948) - a past President of Cardiff Naturalists' Society

(see <https://cardiffnaturalists.org.uk/htmlfiles/150th-03.htm>).

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>

Deadline for submissions to next newsletter: Friday 29 August 2025

Morrey Salmon Project update

Andy Kendall

The hard-working team of volunteers have completed the onsite work at the National Museum of Wales and have amassed the following impressive statistics:

- 3,135 slides cleaned and digitised for CNS purposes
- 886 selected for the Museum to rescan, which along with 192 already scanned, will be put into their Collections Online system.

The team who did the diary transcriptions (Morrey Salmon and Geoffrey Ingram) both onsite and at home also managed some incredible statistics, with an immense word count of 195,000 words.

As well as the glass plate negatives we have indexed, repackaged (over 550) and scanned some examples of his submissions to the Zoological Photographic Club (<https://zpc-naturefolio.weebly.com/history.html>) which both Salmon and Ingram were members of and have also cleaned, indexed, repackaged (over 300) and once again scanned a selection of his photographic prints.

We have rediscovered some early colour work from 1910 onwards, which Robin the museum photographer has helped us identify as using the Thames colour process, and a number of stereoscopic negatives.

We have estimated that at the Museum pay scales that they have given us for their part of the work (which the Salmon family are kindly funding) that the effort and cash that we and the Salmon family are donating to the Museum tops £80,000 in value, which is a truly impressive figure almost worthy of the Society's formative and hay-days when we were working to bring the National Museum of Wales to Cardiff.

Some highlights have already been put online and we will continue to share some of the things that the Museum will not be making available through their systems so that people can enjoy some of the interesting facts around not just Morrey Salmon, but the team of people who worked with him and supported him and had adventures with him. For example, this (abridged) from Saturday 25 May 1912 which explains the hard work that you had to do in order to get bird photographs in those days...

In the afternoon Bert & I cycled down to Porthcawl. We had a pretty lively time, Bert got a puncture at Ely, and we were about an hour finding and mending that, and then it was going down about every 7/8 miles or so. however, we got one of Hancock's motor vans to tow us from Cowbridge to Bridgend, which save a lot of fag, as we had all the cameras etc. on the bikes. We arrived at Porthcawl just before 6 pm., and went to the station to get the tent. I had packed the tent, the hiding tents, blankets, cooking things, wire for elec. release, everything else unbreakable that I could into a parcel & sent them down by passenger train yesterday (Friday).

It was a very nice little package, weighed just under 50 lbs. Well, the first thing when we got to Porthcawl was to go to the station to see that it was there. The porter in the parcel office calmly informed us that there was nothing there, and that nothing had been delivered to Mr. Duck that day. (I addressed it to P'cawl station to be called for, but c/o Fred Duck in case it went astray). However, when we had cooled down a bit, we went along to Duck's shop, and there it was in his shop alright. Those railway chaps are _____ fools.

Next thing to do was to get provisions. we went round and got the stuff, it was very funny, everyone wanted to send it for us, but we told them it didn't matter as we would take it with us. Would have been rather funny if we have said "Oh, alright, send it out, address : Somewhere between Sker & the Pyle Brook (sorry - Kenfig river according to the Ordnance map). We got a dozen eggs, one of which I immediately smashed, so borrowed a teacup from Mrs. Duck to put it in, tied a bit of paper round the top & took it out that way. Well, we got everything, and started off. We had all the cameras on the bikes already, then there was the grub, in two big frails, which Bert took, and I hoisted the tent parcel on top of my bike, and we wheeled them along to a quiet spot out of the traffic, and commenced operations.

The tent parcel was rather bulky, as the stuff was big for the weight, blankets etc. It was about 4 ft. x 2 ft. like this with the tent & hiding tent poles tied across, & projecting about 6/7 inches each end. So we tied the ends of the sticks on to the bike frame under & at the back of the saddle, and then the fun commenced when we tried to get on & ride. we found we couldn't ride at all, so we walked out, pushing the two bikes with the tent as it was, as far as Sker Point. We didn't start until nearly 7 pm. and it was now, about 8.40. Then thought of a better dodge. I took my big bag off my handlebars, and Bert slung it over his back, and then I strapped the tent etc. on to my handlebars & we cycled along the sands.

By this time it was after 9 pm. and getting dark, & when we got along the sands some way it was dark. We saw about ¼ mile ahead what we thought was the brook, so we turned into the sandhills, as we thought that was near enough to the gullery, and pretty central for other things. Well, we shoved our bikes across the soft sand up into one of those entrances, and started to look for a spot to pitch the tent. We found a very nice little place, well sheltered, but not right low down so settled on that. we then got the bikes over to it, and got the tent out. It didn't take us long to get it up, there was a good moon, and we had ½ doz. candles going, all round the place, tied on to sticks stuck in the ground. This was now after 10 o'clock.

When we got the tent all square, and the things inside, we thought we would take a stroll over to the brook, and get some water ready for the morning. Well, we walked and walked, it seemed miles, over the sandhills, before we came to that big open space by the brook. we found we had mistaken a wet patch of sand for the brook in the dark, and we had pitched our tent quite a mile from the blessed stream.

This was just about midnight. when we got back to camp I opened the tin to see how much water had been spilt, and found there was about ½" left in the bottom of the tin.... Then we started to get tea, had sardines, bread & butter, jam, with the remains of several squashed pastries, & we diluted the water with some lemonade, and drank that, finishing at 12.40.am. Sunday.

Then we rolled up in our Blankets, and went to the land of dreams.

The photographs on this page and on page 22 were taken during the field trip described in the diary entry. Top: 'Camp. Kenfig Dunes. 28 May 1912 (for photography of Oystercatchers, Black-headed Gull, Merlin)'. Bottom: 'Kenfig Coast view. 28 May 1912'.



Bioscience Prize 2025

We congratulate **Hannah Mofeez Croft** for winning this year's Cardiff Naturalists' Society Bioscience Prize. This is awarded annually in memory of Prof Ursula Henriques to a second-year School of Biosciences student at the University of Cardiff for their outstanding field course project.

Hannah's project focused on comparing macroinvertebrate communities and habitat quality between the River Taff and the Nant Fawr. Specifically, it explored the effects of urbanisation on these communities. She provides a summary of her project report on the following pages. For those wanting to find out more, Hannah will give a presentation on her work to the Society at a future indoor meeting.



Currently, Hannah is on a professional training year placement at Perth Zoo, Australia, from where she sends this photo with one of the native Quokka.

Comparative Analysis of Structural Diversity and Freshwater Macroinvertebrate Communities in Urbanised and Natural River Habitats

Hannah Mofeez Croft

In June 2024, I swapped my backpack and laptop for waders and a kick-net to explore the hidden biodiversity beneath the surface of Cardiff's beautiful rivers. My project aimed to investigate how urbanisation affects freshwater ecosystems by comparing macroinvertebrate communities and habitat quality of the urban River Taff with the more natural Nant Fawr.

The River Taff is steeped in Cardiff's industrial history – its course re-engineered and its waters historically polluted by coal and sewage. In contrast, Nant Fawr flows more gently through green spaces and woodlands, retaining many of its natural features. Over 4 days I sampled 5 sites on each river (Fig. 1), collecting macroinvertebrates using standard kick-sampling techniques and assessing habitat diversity through the River Habitat Survey.



Figure 1 Maps of the two study rivers with sampling sites marked.

What I found was both surprising and telling. Although the Taff supported a higher abundance of macroinvertebrates, it showed significantly lower diversity compared to Nant Fawr. The Taff's communities were dominated by pollution-tolerant species, while Nant Fawr hosted a more even and diverse spread, including sensitive bioindicator taxa like caddisflies and mayflies. This highlighted a key ecological principle: higher abundance does not always mean better health. Diversity, not just numbers, matters.

I also explored how habitat quality – measured using Habitat Quality Assessment (HQA) scores – influenced macroinvertebrate diversity and abundance. Surprisingly, linear regression analyses revealed no significant relationships between HQA and community metrics in either river. This suggests that other factors – such as water pollution, presence of weirs or historical land use – may play a more prominent role in shaping community structure than habitat complexity alone.

The River Taff, despite its ongoing recovery, continues to show signs of ecological stress. Litter, flow barriers like weirs, and continued sewage overflow (with over 9 500 hours recorded in 2022) all likely contribute to its reduced diversity. Nant Fawr, on the other hand, demonstrated how natural structure and flow variability can support more resilient aquatic communities.

My project emphasised the nuanced effects of urbanisation on river ecosystems. It also reminded me of the importance of looking beyond surface impressions—beneath murky waters lies a delicate balance of life, which tells us far more about our environment than we might expect.

Weather Summary for North Cardiff 2024

This weather summary for North Cardiff has been compiled from figures recorded in Thornhill, a location with observations going back to 1986. Report by **Liz Kerley**

Following the wettest month ever recorded at this location in December 2023, the New Year started with two very wet days (37.6 mm on 1st and 27.5 mm on the 2nd) but then things settled down becoming dry and cold until Storm Isha arrived on the 21st. From that point on the winter was mild and wet. February saw rain on every day, giving the wettest February ever recorded (317.7 mm) and the third wettest month ever. Overall, the weather of 2023-24 (i.e. December 2023, January and February 2024) was the wettest ever at this location.

The spring was also wetter than average and was most notable for the lack of sunshine, which led to temperatures being lower than in recent years until well into May. This made for a difficult growing season. Plants were slower to germinate and develop due to the lack of sunlight and warmth.

Temperatures during the summer were also depressed, again due to the lack of sunshine, although rainfall amounts were close to average. June was the driest month of the year, with just 38.7 mm of rain. July and August produced equal amounts of rain. A brief heatwave at the end of July lifted temperatures over 30°C on the last three days but these were the only days over 30°C in the year.

September brought another very wet month (199.1 mm), the third wettest September recorded, despite a week of warm dry weather between the 13th and 21st. Rain fell on all but 6 days in October, so again sunshine was limited. November saw high pressure established during the first two weeks, but it was very cloudy and dry. However, after the 17th it became much wetter with storm Bert on the 23rd giving the wettest day of the year (53.7 mm). Flooding, landslips and sink holes occurred in the valleys. A shorter cold spell from the 19th to 21st saw sleet and snow fall for a brief time on the 19th and 20th, but it didn't settle.

Weather Summary for North Cardiff 2024

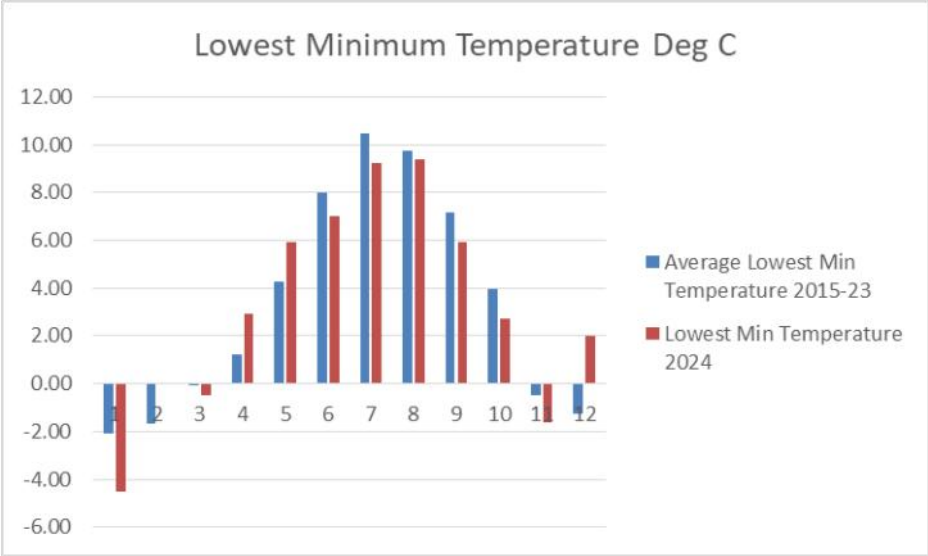
Annual Weather for North Cardiff 2024				
	<u>Jan.</u>	<u>Feb.</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>
	1	2	3	4
Total Rainfall in mm	142.6	317.7	197.7	93.2
Highest in one day in mm	37.6	34.0	29.0	11.1
Date of Highest Rainfall	1st	13th	14th	7th
Highest Maximum Temperature Deg. C	13.3	14.2	15.2	20.4
Date of Highest Temperature	21st/23rd	18th	18th	12th
Lowest Minimum Temperature Deg. C	-4.5	0.0	-0.5	2.9
Date of Lowest Temperature	18th	24th	3rd	18th
Although exposures for both rainfall & temperatures are not Met. Office standard				
the above figures are reasonably representative of the suburban conditions.				

<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Aug.</u>	<u>Sept.</u>	<u>Oct.</u>	<u>Nov.</u>	<u>Dec.</u>
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
96.7	38.7	92.3	92.3	199.1	160.2	153.4	143.6
30.0	13.5	29.1	21.0	34.9	25.8	53.7	29.8
13th	13th	8th	12th	6th	16th	23rd	4th
25.5	29.2	31.2	28.8	22.3	18.9	16.0	13.3
10th	25th	31st	11th	2nd	7th	23rd	5th
5.9	7.0	9.2	9.4	5.9	2.7	-1.6	2.0
4th	9th	4th	25th	12th	11th	20th	20thh
			Total Rainfall			1727.5	mm
						68.0	inches
			Long Term Average			1489.2	mm
						58.6	inches

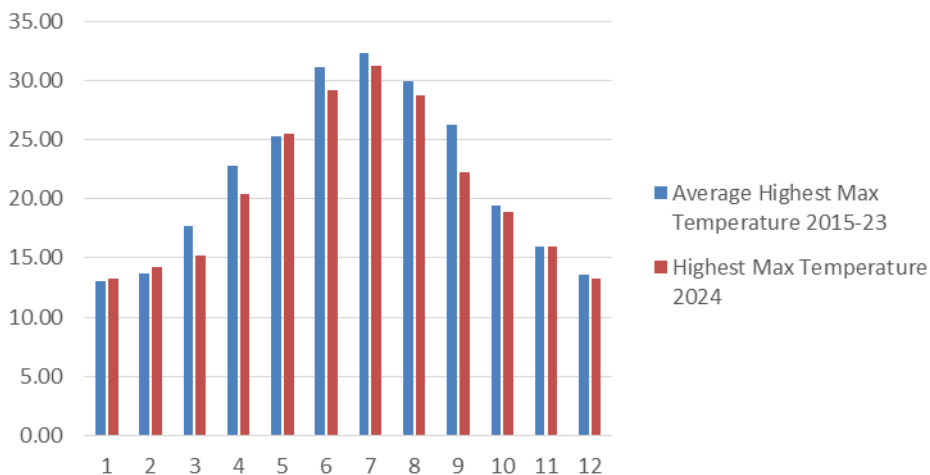
Weather Summary for North Cardiff 2024

The start of winter in December saw rainfall continue on most days. Storm Darragh brought very high winds on the 7th and 8th with many trees blown down in Cardiff. High pressure around Christmas produced very cloudy. Gloomy weather until winds picked up at the end of the month bringing wet and windy weather for New Years Eve.

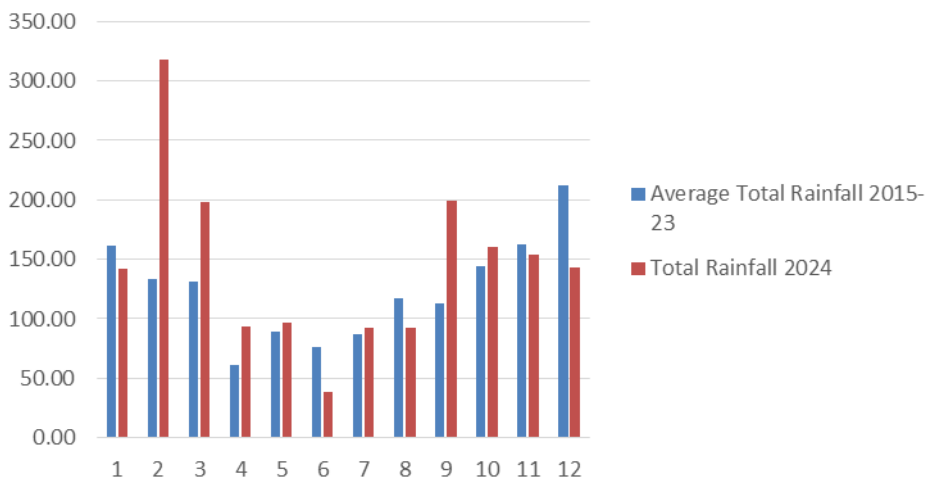
Although sunshine hours are not made, it is obvious that this year was an exceptionally cloudy year. This kept temperatures lower in the spring and summer but milder in the autumn and winter. Frost was recorded on 9 occasions with the lowest temperature -4.3°C on the 19th January. The highest temperature was 31.2°C on 31st July. The wettest month was February and the driest June. Rain was recorded every day from 27th January till 6th March. The annual rainfall total was 1727.5 mm, the fifth wettest year recorded.



Highest Maximum Temperature Deg. C



Rainfall mm (Total for Year 2023 - 1675.5mm)



CARDIFF BIRDWATCH: 7th January 2025

At least 17 birders, including Cardiff Nats. members and friends from the Wildlife Trust, assembled beside the River Taff outside Channel View Leisure Centre on a dry but chilly morning. The usual gulls, swans, ducks, grebes, cormorants and coots were noted before we set off towards Hamadryad Park and the Cardiff Bay Wetland Reserve (CBWR).

Small birds were relatively scarce but some of us were captivated by a Goldcrest and all enjoyed a flock of long-tailed tits feeding acrobatically overhead in a riverside tree.

In sunshine at Hamadryad inlet it was a treat to watch a kingfisher diving repeatedly from a low perch. There were also goldfinches feeding in the alders and a Cetti's warbler which announced its presence with its explosive call and afforded a brief glimpse to a lucky few.

We loitered on the CBWR renovated boardwalk where a Great Crested Grebe gave close views. A mob of Black-headed Gulls were bathing vigorously in a particular patch of water while a tight flock of over 100 tufted ducks swam to & fro. The lone Pochard stayed aloof. A pair of Reed Buntings were spotted feeding from swaying reed seedheads.



After failing to spot anything new from the reserve overlook by the St. David's Hotel we retraced our steps. A couple of 'redhead' (female or immature) Goosanders swam serenely down the Taff where we'd also spotted the fluffy backsides of 2 little grebes sheltering under the far bank.

Back at Channel View, some of us enjoyed our picnic lunches while watching teams of rowers being put through their paces – a men's eight and a women's four.

A reduced party of 7 regrouped in the carpark off Marconi Way in Penarth. After admiring hazel catkins (harbingers of Spring!) we followed the bank of the River Ely all the way to the Barrage. Two Common Sandpipers (waders which breed around the upland lakes and rivers of Wales but usually winter in Africa) were a good find. They were joined by at least 3 redshanks and a turnstone paddling along the river's edge searching for morsels. Grey and Pied Wagtails also fed nearby.



Great Crested Grebe

At the barrage there was the usual group of 20+ loafing Cormorants but new species eluded us despite a brief foray below the Penarth cliffs. We made our way back alongside the yacht basin, passing the Lewis Alexander boat which once took visitors to Flat Holm. Thankful for a pleasant day in good company and nearly 40 species on our bird list we returned to our cars.

Report and photos by **Linda Nottage**.



Catkins, Common Sandpiper

Margaret Elizabeth Morgan 01.10.1940 - 02. 03 2025



Margaret will be fondly remembered as an art lover, linguist, keen birdwatcher and all things outdoors. In recent years she had been confined to her home due to ill health, but was always upbeat and positive and in touch with her many friends and family far and wide.

At her small private funeral on 2nd April, we were reminded of her time studying Science at Bristol University, before going on to teach the subject, eventually moving to London. We even met friends and family who had enjoyed playing tennis with her in Golders Green! She gained qualifications in teaching English as a foreign language and moved to Sweden for two years to teach on behalf of the British Council, eventually returning to Wales where her parents lived and where she met her partner Graham Duff. He was an avid birdwatcher and photographer and will be particularly remembered by Cardiff Nats members for the slideshows he put together of members' wildlife photographs prior to indoor meetings.

Margaret was a Welsh speaker, helped with sessions in Cardiff for Welsh learners and learnt Spanish with an enthusiastic group in Llandaff. She enjoyed worldwide travel to places as different and diverse as Antarctica, Israel, Peru and the Gambia. She enjoyed yoga and was an avid reader and lifelong learner. She will be sorely missed by those who knew her and who enjoyed her company and many stories. - Linda Morris and Eirian Edwards.

Morrey Salmon Project update (Continued)

Andy Kendall

Photograph taken during the field trip described in the diary entry (pages 7-8). 'Camp, Kenfig Dunes—HM Salmon, Granville Evans, GCS Ingram. 28 May 1912.'



Further pictures and information from the Morrey Salmon project will be on display on the 12th of July at the Nature event at the St Fagans Folk Museum. There will also be a brief presentation on the project at the Unknown Wales event at the Museum in Cathays Park on the 11th of October.

'Billy the Seal'

The Morrey Salmon project team sometimes came across pictures which were not part of Morrey Salmon's core wild bird photography hobby. One of the places that he visited from time to time was the (now defunct) Victoria Park Zoo. His photos from here include a seal which we presume to be Cardiff's famous "Billy the Seal".



A selection of Morrey Salmon's images



Red-backed Shrike young in nest (22 June 1921).



Grey Heron, Thaw Valley (12 April 1925).



Ronald Lockley (left) and Ex-King Ferdinand of Bulgaria (centre) at the IOC Congress 1934 on-board a Royal Navy Destroyer “borrowed” for the day to ferry birdwatchers around 3 islands.



Merlin and chicks, Ireland Moor, Radnorshire (6 July 1952).

Kenfig National Nature Reserve



Early Purple Orchid, Emperor Moths. Photos by Phill Blanning.

Gower Flowers



Wild flowers on the Gower clifftops, including Violets, Creeping Comfrey, Cowslip, Daisies, Primrose, Lesser Celandine, Blackthorn, Creeping Ivy, Three-cornered Leek, Bluebell & Gorse. Photos by Linda Morris.



Photo: Apple blossom by Phill Blanning (see page 26 for other photos from Kenfig National Nature Reserve).

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