

**Ynys-hir and Ynyslas and Cors Fochno
14 May 2018**

Organizers Sue Southam & Lizzie Beare

What a day! Cloudless skies all day and only the hint of a breeze at Ynyslas. We were glad we had arranged an earlier-than-usual meeting time of 11am at Machynlleth to tick off attendees and it was then we learned with some concern that the Holts would not be coming as Brayton had been hospitalized suddenly. The group quickly decided who was going where, re-arranged their transport accordingly and set off promptly keen to make the most of the perfect weather.

Justin Lyons, the Warden at Ynyslas gave us an informative overview of what we were likely to see in the way of birds, plants and reptiles, for which the site is renowned and showed us a photo on his phone of the rare Sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* which has bright green flanks, but warned us that we would be very unlikely to see one by chance and in fact they are so rare you need to have a license to search for them. He led us to the largest slack in the dunes - a low lying area with a high water table and showed us Adderstongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, about 2cm tall, the liverwort Petalwort, *Petalophyllum ralfsii* embedded in the moss and only the size of a small peppercorn; on the low creeping willow the bright red Poplar leaf beetle *Chrysomela populi*, similar to a ladybird but without spots. Thereafter the group roamed the dunes, the beach and the slacks and noted the following: Sea mouse-ear *Cerastium diffusum*, Corn salad *Valerianella locusta*, Dove's-foot cranesbill *Geranium molle*, Common Storksbill *Erodium cicutarium*, Germander and Heath speedwell, *Veronica chamaedrys* and *officinalis*, Common milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*, Common vetch *Vicia sativa* possibly *ss nigra* and the tiny Early forget-me-not *Myotis ramosissima*, Sea spurge *Euphorbia paralias*, and Portland spurge *Euphorbia portlandica*. Notable birds were a passing flock of ringed plovers *Charadrius hiaticula*, flying low on the estuary shoreline, Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* singing, Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* trilling, Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* perching and Meadow pipits *Anthus pratensis* descending. St Mark's flies also known as Hawthorn fly *Bibio marci*, were everywhere dangling their hind legs over the marram grass.

Of those who visited Ynys-hir most hoped to see Flycatchers and possibly a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker but were disappointed, however the highlight of the day was the Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* on her nest, on top of a wall, about 15 feet away from the 'Domen Las' hide along the Saltmarsh trail. The Wetland Trail boardwalk was visited and from The Woodland Trail hide fine views were enjoyed across the estuary. The varied habitat provided a good list of plants and birds seen or heard were: Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Red kite *Milvus milvus*, Wood warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*. A cloud of Brimstone butterflies *Gonepteryx rhamni* delighted.

Some stalwarts managed to find time to visit Cors Fochno, a raised peat bog where they saw Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis* just beginning to unfurl, Bog myrtle *Myrica gale*, Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, Small heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*, Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*, and a hairy caterpillar as yet unidentified.

Four members visited Penny Condry, widow of Bill Condry, where she still lives at Ynys Edwin, a cottage on the Ynys-hir estate. Bill Condry was Warden there from 1969 - 82 and was one of the main forces in preserving the Welsh Red Kite. He wrote many books on a wide range of naturalist subjects until his death in 1998. The Bill Condry lectures continue to be held in his honour annually in Machynlleth. Penny was most welcoming. We admired her rambling garden which she still tends herself at 92, and sat at a vast slab of slate for a garden table while she commented with a remarkable memory on naturalists and events of the past. Thanks to Ruth Dawes for organising this visit to her friend for three of the MFS Council members.

From our various locations we re-gathered at Y Plas in Machynlleth for a very good tea in the John Edwards room where we all sat round a huge table and swapped stories of the day.