

Nature Tour from the Dyfi to the Mawddach, Between Two Estuaries, 25th June 2010

A day exploring the breathtaking landscape of Wales' south Snowdonia between the Dyfi and Mawddach Estuaries, its birds, flowers, history and theatre.

Castell y Bere

The day started dry but cloudy, and we began our tour at the historic but luckless Castell y Bere built by Llewellyn the Great, captured by Edward I and finally destroyed by Welsh forces all within the 13th century. We were looking for a large colony of wild marjoram seen in previous years and which we found growing from the steps of the castle itself. Overhead we saw several ravens.

We had a wonderful view down the Dysynni Valley to Craig yr Aderyn, or Bird Rock, which once rose directly from the sea. Through the centuries, the sea receded, but the cormorants whose ancient fortress it was, still fly several miles up the valley from the sea each evening to nest and roost there.



Castell y Bere

Craig yr Aderyn

We made our way down from the lofty remains of the castle, and wended our way along the beautiful Dysynni Valley to get a closer view of Craig yr Aderyn. En route we saw several small flocks of goldfinches as well as numerous small tits, finches and wagtails among the bramble, stunted trees and swathes of foxgloves and honeysuckle. At Craig yr Aderyn, the cacophony of the cormorants was amazing, with birds wheeling out from their nest sites on the air currents. We also watched a juvenile wheatear close up among the tumbled rocks of the crag.



Cormorant



Juvenile Wheatear

We then moved across the valley to Pont y Garth, where we saw a pair of pied wagtails feeding young, and a juvenile robin around the bridge, as well as juvenile blue tits and great tits around the banks of the Dysynni River.

Happy Valley / Cwm Maethlon

Then a quick trip up to Happy Valley or Cwm Maethlon and a short walk along the road close to the summit, with a spectacular view across the Dyfi Estuary south to the blanket bog of Cors Fochno. The verges were awash with colour such as



Pied Wagtail

the clumps of marsh pea, *lathyrus palustris*, and noisy with the buzzing of bees in the now bright sunshine. We saw numerous meadow pipits and a few ravens 'kronking' overhead as well as some juvenile great spotted woodpeckers further down in the valley. After sitting just gazing down at the Dyfi Estuary for a short while, we drove slowly back down peaceful Cwm Maethlon for a leisurely lunch in the Dysynni Valley.



Marsh pea, lathyrus palustris

Llangelynnin Old Church

In the afternoon, we set off towards the Mawddach Estuary, stopping first to visit the ancient 12th century church at Llangelynnin high up on the

cliffs above Cardigan Bay. Having spotted linnets on the edge of the churchyard, and cormorants skimming the surface out to sea, we entered the tiny church to find the amazing remains of paintings, uncovered relatively recently during renovation work, including the Creed, and the Ten Comandments, written in Welsh, and a rendition of a skull and crossbones.

Barmouth

Driving north, we quickly reached Morfa Mawddach, where we set off across the iconic Barmouth Bridge to view the estuary in the best possible way. Against a brilliant blue sky, we saw more pipits on the fence posts, and a large group of oystercatchers on the sand by the bridge, as the tide began swirling in. We crossed the bridge into Barmouth, and took to the sand and sea to cool off briefly in the hot sunshine – with some help here and there!

In the town, the National Theatre of Wales were staging *For Mountain Sand and Sea*, taking the stories of a seaside town – the memories, anecdotes and reflections of its inhabitants – and transforming them into evocative cameos and performances. This included a performing elephant and a time warp on the Barmouth Bridge back to World War II. Finally, after a full day, we returned to Talyllyn and finished our tour with a sumptuous dinner at the Ty'n y Cornel Hotel.



Photographs of Lathyrus Palustris and the Barmouth Elephant courtesy of and Copyright Dave and Linda

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