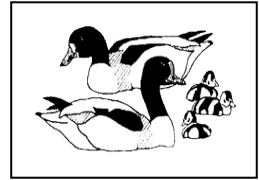


# Newsletter



Issue 143

April 2017

Registered Charity No. 510146

Welcome to the April edition of the Newsletter. We are fast approaching the time when all our overwintering visitors have made their way back home and we will be host to our new intake of summer visitors.

A warm welcome on to the Committee to Corinne Williams who will be taking over from Damien Brady in the organisation of all our indoor meetings. I am sure she would welcome any suggestions for speakers that members know of who may have some interesting insights into the many aspects of nature.

My apologies to Ian Spence who was omitted from the original Events Programme card, I got it right in the re-vamped card this time Ian.

For those members who are not aware, we do have a closed Facebook group that is run by Ron Plummer. An ideal platform for showing your photographs from the Reserve and further afield and indeed informing other members of any events that may be of interest to them. The Facebook page is: Members of the Deeside Naturalists Society.

Whilst on the subject of media and communication, Bob Must is in the process of compiling a list of members email addresses in order to facilitate any quick response mail shots that may be required. Members who are happy to give permission for their email address to be used will be added to the list. Please contact Bob Must at: [epoc@deenats.org.uk](mailto:epoc@deenats.org.uk)

A comprehensive 2016 Bird Report for the reserve by Glenn Morris is available for viewing on the Society's website along with the 2016 Butterfly report by Christine Hamer.

*Alan Smethurst*

# Indoor Meetings 2017

All indoor meetings (**except the October meeting**) will be held at Connah's Quay Community Centre, Tuscan Way, off Chapel Street, CH5 4DZ and will start at 7.30pm.

**Friday 15th September. Steve Palin,**  
'Butterflies, Dragonflies and Moths'

**Friday 20th October. Mike Taylor, Wepre Park Ranger.**  
A talk on the work and wildlife of Wepre Park including specimens and exhibits.  
(NB: This talk will be held at the new Field Centre, Wepre Park)

**Friday 17th November. Ian Spence**  
Bird ringing at Connah's Quay Nature Reserve.

**Friday 24th November.**  
AGM

## Field Trip

### ***Denhall Lane & RSPB Burton Mere 19th February***

Burton Mere was originally created to host duck shoots but was purchased by the RSPB in 1986 and opened as a nature reserve in 1992. A further purchase of Inner Marsh Farm was made in 2006 and the fisheries were added in 2008.

We met up on Denhall Lane which is situated to the west of Burton on the SW bank of the Dee Estuary. A short walk took us to a raised observation point overlooking Decca pool where we had sightings of Lapwing, Little Egret, Widgeon, and Little Grebe amongst others, a couple of Kestrel were working the marsh and we passed a group of around ten Linnets en route back to the cars.

A short car journey took us to RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands where we saw our first 'Highlight of the day', a couple of Avocet, which were the first two to arrive on site only a day earlier. From the visitor's centre we saw the usual range of ducks and waders and spent an unfruitful twenty minutes trying to get a sighting of a Snipe that was apparently in amongst the reeds. A Marsh Harrier gave us a good display over the marsh just beyond the lagoons, succeeding in flushing all things feathered out for a short while.

Continuing on to the Inner Marsh Farm hide we encountered Cetti's Warbler (audio only), Ruff, a single Goldeneye and a magnificent sighting of a Goldcrest who entertained us for some minutes. All in all we had a species count for the day of 35.

*Alan Smethurst*

# Field Trip

## *Pennington Flash Country Park 8th January*

Pennington Flash is a 200-hectare (490-acre) country park located between Lowton and Pennington in Greater Manchester.

The flash is a 70-hectare (170-acre) lake created at the turn of the 20th century by coal mining subsidence, mainly from Bickershaw colliery, and flooding. Now an extensive nature reserve with several bird hides and a network of tracks and footpaths. Pennington Flash Country park is nationally renowned for its birdlife and is a classic example of natural regeneration and is one of the premier bird watching sites in the north west. Over 230 bird species have been recorded on site.



We arrived on an atmospheric morning, no wind, Canada Geese, Black headed Gulls, Coots and Mallards being fed by small children, a stillness in the air....and a great big mist over the flash, you couldn't see more than twenty metres! But undeterred we assembled and decided we would go around the hides before lunch, hoping that the mist would eventually lift.

The second hide, Bunting Hide, lived up to its name, the feeding station was full of Reed Buntings, there were almost twenty. Together with the Reed Buntings were Nuthatches, Bullfinches, Chaffinches, Greenfinches and a Willow Tit. Feeding on the ground were a flock of some twenty five Stock Doves. A good variety of wildfowl were seen from the other hides, Teal, Gadwall, Shoveler, Tufted Duck and Goosander.



We returned to the car park for lunch and thankfully the mist was lifting. After lunch we set out for Ramsdale Ruck, which is a large spoil heap, grassed over and with birch plantings that was created when the Flash was partially filled with colliery waste. It is also bounded by the Liverpool Leeds canal.

The area provided a vantage point to look down upon the Flash and the birds seen were: Little Grebe, Pochard, Great Crested Grebe, Shelduck, Lapwing, Little Egret, Cormorant, a good collection of gulls, Black Headed, Common, Lesser Black Backed, Herring and Great Black Backed; but the bird of the day, sitting in a small bay, was a Long Tailed Duck, what a nice find.

On the walk back to the cars we had a few woodland birds including: Wren, a charm of Goldfinches and a Great Spotted Woodpecker.

It is a number of years since I last visited Pennington Flash but it is worth visiting more often than that, the total number of bird species for the day was 45. A good day was had by all.

*Bill Dickinson*

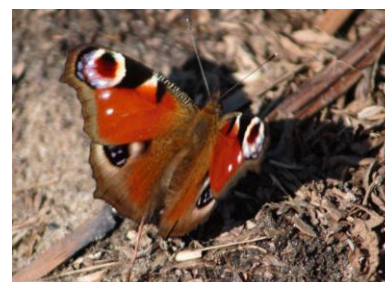
# DNS Butterfly Report 2016

Butterfly monitoring started on the DNS Reserve in 2011. Two areas on the Reserve were set up and up until 2016 the two areas have been monitored each year. However, because of the work being carried out on the Nature Trail area it became increasingly difficult to carry out the counts properly so in 2015 new areas of the Reserve were monitored

Again this year it was decided not to carry out any butterfly monitoring on the Nature Trail area and continue with the new areas which have shown a variety of species. The recorders continued with the three new transects which were set up in 2015 covering the road from the Field Study Centre to the Helipad and also the path alongside the access road to the Reserve. The Wetland Meadow area was monitored as usual.

Counts were carried out between May and the end of August on eight occasions, not as many this year because of poor weather conditions and personal issues within the group of recorders.

The following were recorded: Small Tortoiseshell, Green Veined White, Peacock, Comma, Large White, Orange Tip, Speckled Wood, Small White, Large Skipper, Common Blue, Red Admiral, Meadow Brown, Small Skipper, Painted Lady, Gatekeeper and Holly Blue. Altogether 16 species recorded this year. There has been a total of 25 species recorded on the reserve since the transects were established in 2011.



There were fewer Small Tortoiseshells this year. Overall numbers across the Reserve peaked in July/August when Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns were there in large numbers.

The results are sent to Butterfly Conservation Wales. Their website is: [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org). Annual reports are produced yearly by UKBMS and available on their website: <http://www.ukbms.org/>

The group of recorders that have given their time to record the butterflies on the DNS Reserve are now stepping down. So that the valuable work can continue DNS is looking for members who would be interested in taking on the organising, recording and sending results to Butterfly Conservation. Although we have been recording the butterfly counts on paper there is now an on-line system. I am willing to show anyone interested in taking on this valuable work, how the recording has been carried out in this and previous years. If you are interested please contact me through the Secretary on: [secretary@deenats.org.uk](mailto:secretary@deenats.org.uk).

**A big 'Thank You' to all our recorders for their time in recording this year.**

*Christine Harmer*

# Reserve Report Jan-Apr

A splendid second half of the winter, thanks to the efforts and sharp eyes of regular visitors to the Reserve. A **Green-winged Teal** on Feb 6<sup>th</sup> was the first logbook record of this species, though there was a report in 2007 on “decestuary.com”. Regarded as a subspecies of Common Teal until quite recently, the males can be recognised by their vertical white stripe, but might otherwise be easily missed in the large wintering flocks on the Reserve. Another exciting development was the appearance of a **Water Rail** on the fly ash lagoon, first on Jan 30<sup>th</sup> and then again during March 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>, possibly resident the whole time and well worth looking out for at the far end of the lagoon. Unusually, we had both our 2<sup>nd</sup> and our 3<sup>rd</sup> records of **Ring Ouzel** as quite early spring migrants; one in Hughie’s field on March 11<sup>th</sup> and another photographed on the fly ash lagoon on March 29<sup>th</sup>. Other early migrants included the first **Wheatear** on March 12<sup>th</sup>, the first **Chiffchaff** on March 14<sup>th</sup>, the first **Avocet** on March 27<sup>th</sup> and **Sand Martins** on March 31<sup>st</sup>. There was some overlap of arrivals with departures, since a flock of **Fieldfare** were using Hughie’s field until March 15<sup>th</sup> and the last **Twite** record was on March 23<sup>rd</sup>.



*Fieldfare on Hughie's field mid-March: photo G.E.Morris*



*Common Sandpiper. Overwintering on the bunded pools: photo G.E.Morris*

Among the waders, both **Greenshank** and **Spotted Redshank** over-wintered in very good numbers, sometimes 8-9 of each on the bunded pools, where a **Common Sandpiper** also seemed to spend the winter, joined briefly by a **Ruff** on Feb 25<sup>th</sup>. The **Snipe** can be quite hard to spot in the short grass on the bunded pool, but numbers remained high until mid-March and as many as 36 were counted on Jan 11<sup>th</sup>. A pair of **Little Ringed Plover** have turned up as usual as spring migrants, though it is unclear whether they are nesting anywhere near the Reserve. The recent devastation of some of the Rockcliffe woodland by National Grid does not seem to have discouraged **Chiffchaff** and **Blackcap** and hopefully they will still nest on the remaining woodland bank.

*Glenn Morris*

Over 3,000 **Pinkfooted Geese** were still present across the river, even in mid-April, and there was a brief visit by 4 **Bewick's** and 4 **Whooper Swans** on the river on Feb 10<sup>th</sup>. Male and female **Hen Harriers** continued to visit the Reserve occasionally and a **Merlin** took a strong interest in the flock of Twite near the West Hide.



*Spotted Redshank in semi-breeding plumage on the bunded pool: photo G.E.Morris*



# Field Trip

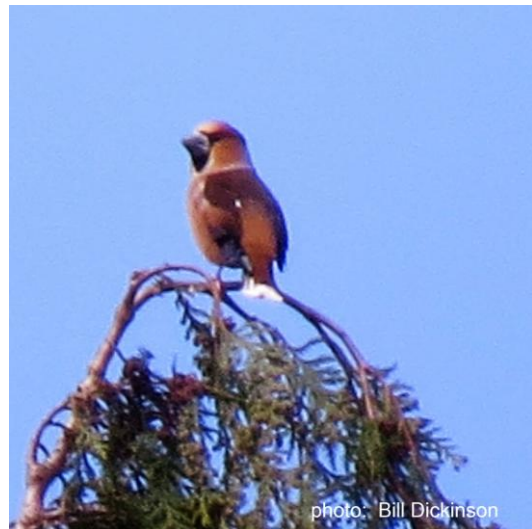
## *Conwy Valley & Conwy RSPB 1st April*

Travelling along the A55 it appeared that the rain was never going to stop, but on arriving at Caerhun Church it had eased to a gentle drizzle.

The Church of St Mary at Caerhun is an atmospheric church that sits on the banks of the River Conwy. The church dates from the 13th century but is renowned for being on the site of the Roman fort Canovium and indeed it is thought that some of the sandstone used in the walls of the church probably came from Cheshire having been part of the Roman fort. Within the church yard were a few small birds together with Gold Crests, flitting about the yew trees.

From this site we also had extensive views of the river Conwy, which had a number of Herring and Lesser Black Backed gulls; around the church were Chiffchaff calling, Pheasant and corvids. There are extensive reed beds along the edges of the river which I believe would warrant further viewing

*Llanbedr-y-Cennin* is a small village on the west side of the Conwy valley which is known as a regular site for Hawfinches. We began scanning the trees around the church but after twenty minutes we hadn't seen the target bird. A walk further up the lane also proved fruitless, we decided to go back down the lane and play a wait and see game and we were rewarded with, at first fleeting glimpses of the birds, they then settled in the trees affording good views. These Hawfinches were lifers for Bernard and Linda, a good result. A Song Thrush was calling from lower down the valley, Buzzards were heard calling and seen gliding over the adjacent woodland and Linda had a brief sighting of a House Martin.



A change from the original plan, we went to RSPB Conwy, situated on the banks of the Conwy estuary, with magnificent views of Snowdonia and Conwy Castle. There was a number of the usual duck: Shelduck, Shoveler, Wigeon, Gadwall, plus Great Crested Grebe and Red Breasted Merganser, along with a few waders: Oystercatcher, Redshank, Curlew and Snipe. Flying over the ponds were at least twenty Sand Martins and a couple of Swallows. The sun was shining at last-what a good day, a shame that there were only two members out on the trip!

*Bill Dickinson*

# Field Meetings 2017

## **Sunday 23rd April.**

***Leasowe Foreshore. Waders, seabirds and migrants.*** Meet at Leasowe Lighthouse car park, Moreton, Wirral (SJ270914) at 9.30am. For further details contact: Bill Dickinson: 07968438121.

## **Sunday 28th May.**

***Wixhall Moss.*** Raised bog SSSI with rare fauna and flora. Maybe a Hobby? Meet at Manor House, Moss Lane, Whixall (SJ505365) at 12.00pm. For further details contact: Alan Smethurst: 07896758222

## **Thursday 15th June.**

***Llandegla Forest.*** Nightjars walk. EVENING MEETING 8.00pm at Llandegla Forest (One Planet Adventure Centre, SJ240524). Please note the Nightjars are about a mile uphill so a fair amount of walking. Warm clothing, a small torch, midge protection (essential) and a flask of warm drink are advisable. For further details contact: Bob Lane: 07985704963 / 01352 770663

## **Saturday 24th June.**

***South Stack RSPB and Cemlyn Bay.*** Spectacular nesting seabird extravaganza. Meet at Llanfairfechan (SH678755) at the Waterfront Cafe at 9.00am. For further details contact: Betty Lee on 01244 550993

## **Saturday 9th September.**

***Hilbre Island.*** Hilbre over high tide - Waders Terns and Skuas. Meet at West Kirby Sailing Centre, Dee Lane (SJ213869) at 9.30am for immediate crossing. For further details contact: Bill Dickinson: 07968438121

## **Sunday 22nd October.**

***Moore Nature Reserve.*** Popular reserve with lakes, woods and pastures, also the possibility of lesser Spotted Woodpecker. Meet at Moore NR, Lapwing Lane, Warrington (SJ573854) at 9.30am. For further details contact: Hugh Stewart: 07527828571

## **Saturday 16th December.**

***Marshside RSPB and Mere Sands Wood LWT.*** Bewick and Whooper Swans with a host of other wildfowl and waders. Meet at Marshside visitor centre (SD353205) at 9.30am. For further details contact: Bill Dickinson: 07968438121.

***Any suggestions regarding sites you may think are well worth a visit, or indeed your favourite places for wildlife watching, please don't hesitate to contact me.***

*Bill Dickinson*

# Group Activities

## **Art Group:**

Every second Thursday of the month at 2.00pm  
Contact: Doreen Boswell on 01352 757309

## **Photographic Group:**

Every 2nd Wednesday of the month at 2.00pm  
Contact: Carl Boswell on 01352 757309

## **Wednesday Group:**

Every 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 1.00pm

*All activities are held at the Field Studies Centre*

# Website

The password for the members area will change on the weekend 6th/7th May to:

**User Name**

**dnsuser**

**Password**

**hkds9312**

Web site: [www.deenats.org.uk](http://www.deenats.org.uk)