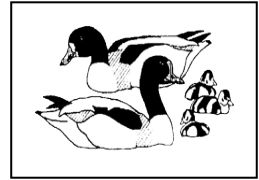


Newsletter



Issue 146

April 2018

Registered Charity No. 510146

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Newsletter.

Using a birdsong App with the intention of attracting birds to observe or photograph them in a Nature Reserve?..... Then beware! Apart from diverting birds from important duties such as feeding their young, all nesting birds are protected under 'The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981' and disturbing them could get you into trouble. Birdsong is not just a pleasant sound to us but is a powerful means of communication for the birds. So please be very mindful of when and where you decide to playback your birdsong app, or better still buy some earphones !

There have been incidents reported of previous members who have not renewed their membership but have elected to retain their key, coming on to the Reserve and not signing in at the barrier. Notwithstanding the ethics of this practice considering the low membership fee, it also poses a security problem for our landlord, Uniper, in the event of an emergency arising. We are therefore intending to do a series of random gate checks throughout the year in an attempt to eliminate the problem.

Following the resignation of Paul Shelton, the position of Chairperson on the Society's Committee has become available. If you feel you would like to engage in helping to facilitate the excellent facility we have at DNS please contact Julie Rogers: secretary@deenats.org.uk.

There have been occasions where members have taken it upon themselves to "make improvements" to the site. Unfortunately this is not in line with the UNIPER Management Plan, so we would request that any project ideas for the site (most welcome as they are) are put before the Committee.

Finally, sadly one of our members Michael Griffiths passed away early last month. He was a keen member of our photographic group.

Alan Smethurst

Nest Box Maintenance 2018

9th January 2018. Betty Lee, Alan Smethurst

Clouds of condensing steam from the power station created an eerie atmosphere, especially as we only saw security and one bird watcher (very unusual) the whole of the dry and just above freezing day. Conditions were ideal for box checking, the bare trees standing out starkly with all but the most hidden boxes showing.

We started with the boxes in the copses just below the entrance gate, then the L-shaped run along the meadow hide hedge, turning right to the ones parallel to the railway. Finally the Field Centre run: these boxes are a mix of newish ones and the original pre 2009 ones, beautifully made and long-lasting courtesy of John Mc Wha.

Site maintenance / tree work has caused us some confusion with boxes disappearing and then reappearing in odd places. One of our Redstart boxes simply disappeared never to be found, the bare nails bearing witness to it's loss.

Out of the 40 boxes we checked, 20 had been used by Blue or Great Tits, mainly moss, some dry grass, the odd feather – and, those with wool lining – fleas! Bath and washing machine busy on our return! Two of the tit boxes had a single egg, one had a little skull and a clump of blue tit feathers and most of the tit boxes had well trampled nests with scurf to be scraped out on the bottom. A box with the smallest hole, 25mm, had a slightly different nest, neatly built with mainly straw. Hopefully a Coal Tit rather than a skinny blue tit! Our boxes with 25mm holes rarely get used.

The most interesting box, Redstart box, RW 21/16, had the whole floor covered with nest material (see below). One of the last boxes we looked at, FC 19, one of John's original boxes had a lined straw nest, bigger and more neatly made than the usual tit nests. (See right) -any ideas?

The only other box of interest had a Wood Mouse leaf nest on top of a tit nest.



Box cleaning must finish before February so birds and little creatures do lose cosy nests at this harsh time but they also lose – hopefully – most of their parasites (on me instead!). Alan also re-sited the lop-sided bat box on to a tree with clear fly-in space which we believe bats like. There were droppings in the boxes - but no reports of bat sightings?

Betty Lee

Reserve Report Dec - Mar

On Jan 8th, seven Bewick's (or Tundra) Swans were seen from the West Hide and there was a wintering Ruff on Jan 2nd. Flocks of up to 100 Golden Plover were reported throughout February, unusual because such high numbers, equal to the previous Reserve record, have not been recorded on the Reserve for nearly 30 years. Conversely, the highest Knot count of the winter was a mere 110 on Feb 25th, and this is a bird seen in flocks of 1000's, even 5-6 years ago, but apparently no longer joining the Black-tailed Godwit and Dunlin flocks as it once did. Snipe numbers on the snow-covered banded pools reached new heights with an astonishing count of 75 on Dec 11th and a Curlew Sandpiper also stayed on the Reserve until mid-December, very late for a migrant bird.

An Iceland Gull on Oakenholt Marsh on Dec 27th was the 4th record for the Reserve and a Glaucous Gull was reported on Jan 26th. There were also records of up to 2 Mediterranean Gulls in the New Year.

A wintering Chiffchaff was seen twice, on Nov 3rd and 5th, and a female Blackcap was present near the banded pools on Dec 21st. A Black Redstart was found on the Nature Trail again on Jan 1st.

Large flocks of 150-250 Chaffinches were along the Nature Trail in November/December and Brambling were present on the feeders in January.

A flock of 15 Redpolls was seen briefly near the Reserve entrance on Dec 20th and on Dec 1st there was a record count of 172 Rooks on the Reserve fields. On the mammal front, stoats were seen regularly and one managed to catch a Blue Tit on New Year's Eve.



Brambling
Photo: A Davies

Finally, the Reserve Report for 2017, with many colour photos, is now available on-line at <http://www.deenats.org.uk/docs/report2017.pdf>

Glenn Morris

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

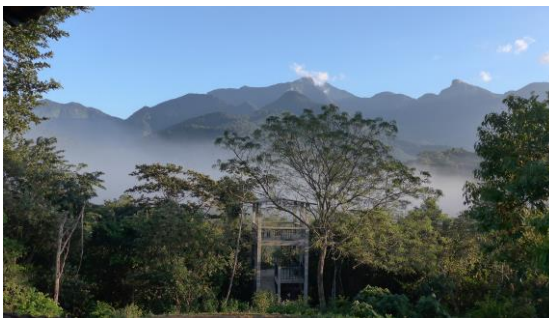
All activities are held at the Field Studies Centre

A Taste of Brazil-Fauna not food

1. REGUA (*Reserva Ecológica de Guapiaçu*)

Bio rich Atlantic rain forest which once covered the Eastern seaboard of Brazil has been devastated by development and farming since the rich coastal plain was so suitable for these activities. The aims of REGUA, about 2 hours north of Rio De Janeiro, where we started our trip, is to re-establish the habitat, acquire more land, involve locals (ex-hunters have made excellent guides!), educate – and encourage eco tourism (great for us) to help fund this work.

Bob and I started our trip in REGUA having heard about it from Sue Loose who had done voluntary work there. Bio-inventories at REGUA show that now, with its continuous forest cover, from humid forest in the lowlands up to Montane Elfin forest at 2,000 metres above sea level, wetlands, rivers, grassland, and farmland, REGUA is an area of high conservation priority; it has become a premier birdwatching site, including many endemics.



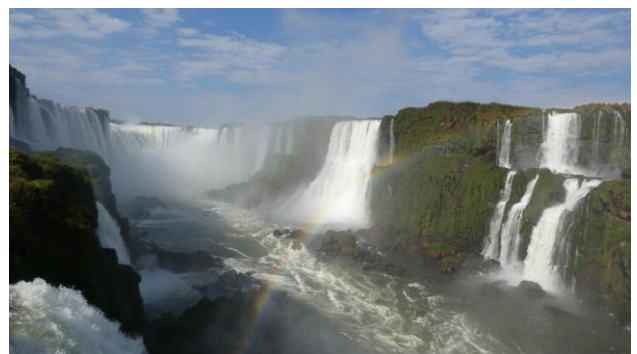
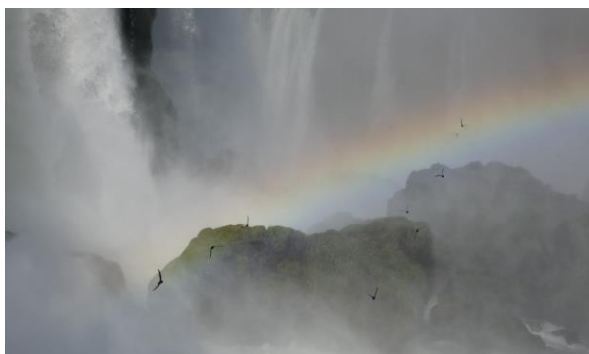
This was the view we had from our bedroom - and wow, we saw many exotic birds in the garden even before we took one of the many lake, forest or mountain trails. The hospitality and guided walks were brilliant! One challenge they have is in getting more Brazilian visitors to become involved. The ones we met were happy to stroll around without binoculars, missing wonderful close-ups of animals and birds.

2. IGUACA FALLS *One of the Wonders of the World*

It took us many hours over two days to wander along the Brazilian and the Argentinian walkways around some of the 250 plus (depending on river levels) waterfalls, the largest system in the world. It is part of a protected rainforest ecosystem and split into two national parks, one in Brazil and one in Argentina.

Great dusky swifts which nest behind the cascading waters, were one of many highlights of the visit.

Just around the corner we also visited the Itaipu Dam on the Paraná River, Brazil/Paraguay, one of the biggest in the world. A waterfall system greater than the Iguacu Falls was destroyed before it could be built!



3. THE PANTANAL

The world's largest tropical wetland with about 80% submerged during the rainy season, it abounds with flora and fauna. Fish, catfish in particular, are the mainstay - eaten by everyone, Caimans, birds, Giant Otters, us....

Giant Otters and Jaguars are the best of enemies. Here we watched a Jaguar over the holt, taunting the otters.

We slept and ate on a 'boatel' and had 4 hours in the morning in a small fast boat mainly looking for birds and another 4 hours in the afternoon searching for anything .



With abundant fish and mammals the Yacare Caiman are everywhere, 10 million in fact! So are Capybara and we enjoyed watching Jaguar hunt one – unsuccessfully. We saw Jaguars every day we were out on the river, including one which had only been seen once before; if it had been a new sighting we could have named it.



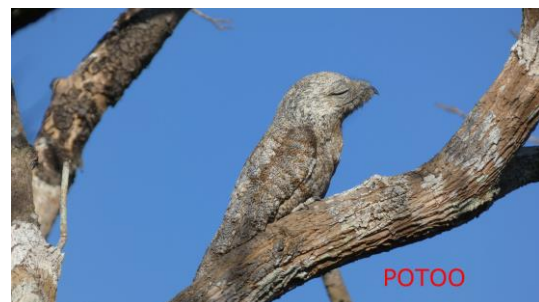
With our splendid guide Sergio we saw secretive birds like the Sun Bittern (right) and Agami Heron

We would never have found these birds like the Great Potoo (right) and the whistling heron by ourselves

Along the Pantaneira from our start at Cuiaba to Porto Jofre, every bumpy bridge was worth a stop, and with our time on rivers, we had the easiest and richest birding ever!



The Pantanal is surrounded by soya crops grown for cattle feed. This is possibly the biggest threat to ecosystems as crop chemical run off has no where else to go, just the Pantanal. So far this magical place flourishes, long may it do so.



Betty & Bob Lee July/Aug 21017

Field Trip, North Wales coast - 14th Jan

We met at the field study centre on what was a bright Sunday morning. I hope that this is a good omen for the year.

The first stop of the day was Danger Point car park at Talacre. After decamping from the cars and crossing Station Road, where from the railway bridge, we had good views of Greenland white-fronted geese in the field next to the railway. Also in the area were Greylag and Canada geese, Lapwing, Blacktailed Godwit, Wigeon, Little Egret and Curlew.

From here we went to the Point of Ayr for the high tide, on the walk out to the point we saw Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Chiffchaff, Wren, Reed Bunting and Song Thrush. From the newly erected hide we had views of Dunlin, Sanderling, Grey Plover, Shelduck, Pintail and Oystercatcher.



Next stop was Pensarn for a bit of sea watching (my recce the week before didn't identify that this day there would be 400 runners from the Borders League). It was a quick look from the promenade that gave views, some distant, of Turnstone, Great Crested grebe, Eider, Common and Velvet scoter.



Lunch and the final site of the day was RSPB Conwy. The nature reserve is a wetland site on the east bank of the Conwy estuary; it is home to a variety of wildlife.

Starting on the boardwalk and visiting the Tal-y-Fan and Carneddau hides we saw Snipe, Gadwall, Goldeneye, Teal, Wigeon, Tufted duck, Heron, Shoveler and Oystercatcher on the water. Goldfinch, Reed Bunting, Greenfinch, Chaffinch and Siskin were seen on the trail.

Returning, along the side of the river Conwy which by now was at low water, to the car park the mud flats held good numbers of Shelduck, Redshanks and Curlews. Towards the mouth of the river and the bridge there was a party of twelve Grey Herons fishing in the shallow pools.

It was a good end to the day's birding that saw eleven members enjoying a nice winter's day and sixty plus birds. Thank you.

Bill Dickinson

Field Meetings 2018

SATURDAY 5th MAY, **RSPB Blacktoft Sands**. The tidal reedbed is the largest in England and is important for its breeding Bearded Tits, Bitterns and Marsh Harriers. Meet at 10.00am Blacktoft Sands Reserve car park (SE843232) Google. Bring RSPB membership card. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

THURSDAY 14th JUNE, **Llandegla Forest**. Nightjars. EVENING MEETING 8.00pm at Llandegla Forest visitor centre (SJ240524). Contact Bob Lane 07985704963 / 01352 770633 for more details.

SUNDAY 12th AUGUST, **Frodsham/Weaver Bend**. Migrants and waders on the settling pools and the Weaver Bend. Meet at Brook Furlong (motorway bridge) Frodsham at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

SUNDAY 9th SEPTEMBER, **Hoylake**. High tide wader roost meet at Kings Gap, Hoylake at 8.30am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

SATURDAY 17th NOVEMBER, **Pennington Flash Country Park**. Water and woodland birds. Meet PENNINGTON FLASH COUNTRY PARK car park, (pay & display) St Helens Rd, Leigh (SJ645987) at 9.30am, Contact Bob Must 07712 713397 for more details.

SATURDAY 8th DECEMBER, **Marbury Country Park**. Woodpeckers and woodland birds, wintering Bittern and other water birds. Meet at the car park (pay & display) (SJ652764) at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details

Bill Dickinson

Indoor Meetings 2018

FRIDAY 21st September. Barry Probin. 'A year on the Moss'

FRIDAY 19th October. Jeff Clarke. 'How to build a Naturalist'

FRIDAY 16th November. Mike Roberts. 'Birding in Catalonia'

FRIDAY 23rd November. 'AGM'

Corinne Williams

Marshside and Mere Sands wood 16th Dec

This wetland site is located north of Southport town centre and has some of the best bird watching in the region. The weather was fair considering the heavy rain that we had travelled through getting to the reserve.

The day started with scanning the marshes which produced curlew, Shelduck, Little Egret, Lesser Black Back and Common gulls together with a fly past of Whooper swans. A spell in the hide gave us a large number of wildfowl and waders; Teal, Pintail, Shoveler, Mallard, Tufted duck, while the waders included Snipe, Blacktailed Godwit, Oystercatcher, Golden Plover, Dunlin and Knot. Smaller birds seen were Skylark, Reed Bunting, Stonechat and Greenfinch.

We departed Marshside for lunch and Mere Sands Wood. *Mere Sands Wood, run by the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire* is a small, secluded wildlife-rich haven in the heart of agricultural west Lancashire. The reserve is made up of meres, mature broadleaved and conifer woodland, sandy and wet meadows.

After eating our lunch we headed out on one of the circular walks on the reserve and we were rewarded with a variety of woodland species: Nuthatch, Jay, Song thrush, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Treecreeper and Long Tailed tit. The meadow produced Stock dove, Mistle thrush, Pheasant, Fieldfare, Reed bunting, Goldfish and Kestrel. On the meres were 200 Teal, Little Grebe, Gadwall, Goosander, Great Crested Grebe, Tufted duck, Shoveler and Goosander.

As the mist was coming down and the light fading we decided to call it a day. A day that started with thoughts of “will the rain ever stop?” to seeing almost sixty species. Thanks to those that made the effort.

Bill Dickinson

Digital Media

Web site: www.deenats.org.uk

Email address: webeditor@deenats.org.uk

Facebook page: THE MEMBERS OF DEESIDE NATURALIST SOCIETY