

Newsletter



Issue 149

April 2019

Registered Charity No. 510146

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Newsletter.

PLEASE NOTE: There is a mistake on the 2019 DNS programme card regarding the Open Day. It should read **SATURDAY** 28th September, the high tide time and height are unchanged.

DNS will be holding another members morning on 18th May, 10.00 - 12.00. Everyone is welcome for a chat/get together/exchange of ideas. The Field Centre will be open with light refreshments available. If any member or group would like to share their particular knowledge or have a small display please message Bob Lane – details on website.

We have undertaken the planting of various shrubs (Holly, Gorse, Box and Yew) along the inshore side of the disabled access to the West hide. Willow screening has also been planted, again on the inshore side of the path and if successful it is intended to further plant on the estuary side of the path. The purpose is to reduce visitor's silhouettes on approach to the West hide and thus reducing the chances of the birds being flushed from the marsh and the ash pool. (A big thank you to all the volunteers who turned up to help with planting).

Whilst on the subject of flushing birds out, please note that access for able bodied persons to the West hide is from the car park and not the disabled access path. Furthermore, please don't climb up on the grass banks of the car park as this is also a major disturbance to the birds.

The West hide car park grass banks have been seeded with wildflowers, so hopefully in time we can increase our stock of insects and butterflies in this area.

We have also planted Alder and Grey Poplar from the sluice gate towards the West hide on the river side of the road in order to improve screening to the channel and banded pool in front of the Dee hide. This will be kept manageable by a programme of regular coppicing.

A suggestion by one of our members to leave a border of uncut grass around the meadows when the hay is taken off is being negotiated with parties with the power to influence a decision. Hopefully we can get a positive outcome.

Alan Smethurst

Reserve Report Jan-Mar 2019

January 1st sees the birding slate wiped clean and listing starts anew for 2019. If you need reminding of last year's sightings then The Deeside Naturalists' Society Bird Report for 2018 is published on our web site: www.deenats.org.uk

This quarter marks the end of winter moving into spring. So far our winter birds are still with us and we are yet to witness any significant spring migration. On the reserve **Greenshank** numbers are holding reasonably well however **Redshank** and **Spotted Redshank** appear to be wintering elsewhere. Because our winter was relatively warm the large numbers of waders may not have been driven as far south this year seeking food. Data collected by the British wide **WeBS** count will show the winter distribution of waders and the bigger picture.

The Dee estuary is an important wintering ground for waders away from their traditional summer breeding sites of Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, Iceland, Greenland and the Arctic Circle; they are attracted by the relatively mild temperatures and abundant feeding of microscopic organisms in the rich tidal mud.

Black-tailed Godwits, Oystercatchers, Redshank, Curlew, Teal and Wigeon rely on our section of the internationally important Dee Estuary. They have to take the opportunities afforded by twice daily flowing and ebbing tides covering and exposing the wet mud providing optimum conditions to feed. It is vital they take on enough calories to see them through the winter and into the correct condition to fly back to those breeding colonies in time to breed.

When this muddy feeding area is covered with water then they must find safe roosting to preserve that precious energy. It is a fine balance between resting and feeding. Anything that destroys that balance will prejudice their chance of survival.

Connah's Quay nature reserve provides a welcome and necessary high tide roost. Thousands of waders and wildfowl take advantage of the salt marsh and pools up to two hours before and after a high tide depending on the height of the tide and prevailing weather. Human disturbance can and must be avoided if these birds are to continue to use our reserve and survive to produce future generations. It is that critical.

Similarly reduced numbers have been recorded for our wintering Twite, a popular draw for bird watchers in February and March.

Highlights during this winter quarter include: **Barn owl** hunting around eastern reserve. Three **Egyptian geese** on the river. Two dark bellied **Brent geese** on Oakenholt marsh. Three **Jack Snipe** regularly seen on the Ash pool reed margins. Single **Avocet** on edge of flowing tide. Three **Brambling** wintered with large flock of **Chaffinch**. 200 **Woodpigeons** with 140 **Stock doves**. A male Hen harrier regularly cruising the salt marsh.

Sue and Pete Haslem.

DNS Wildlife Report

With spring now well and truly underway there have been a several interesting sightings around the reserve covering moths, mammals, flowers and fungi.

MOTHS - There seems to never have been any moth recording done in the spring on the Reserve, so I have been down a few times to try and record some of the winter/spring species to build the site list. So far in 2019 we have recorded 8 species, all new for the Reserve.

Brown-spot Flat Body (*Agonopterix alstromeriana*) - an uncommon species in North Wales, but abundant on the nature reserve near to its host plant, Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), 18 were seen on the night of the 19th March.

Grey-shoulder Knot (*Lithophane oritopus*) - a single on the 27th February.

Oak Beauty (*Biston strataria*) - 2 records this spring of this rather impressive early species, the first was on the 27th February.

Early Moth (*Theria primaria*) - a total of 15 were seen on site on the evening of the 8th January, this appears to be the highest single site count in North Wales.

Dotted Border (*Agriopis marginaria*) - a single on the 27th February.

Whilst very common, **Common Quaker**, **Hebrew Character** and **Clouded Drab** have now all been recorded and now added to the site list.

BUTTERFLIES -

Peacock (*Aglais io*) - the first of the year was seen on the 25th February, with 15 on the 29th March.

Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*) - the first of the year was on the 25th February, the highest count so far is 6 on the 27th March.

Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) - only one record so far this year, 1 on the 25th February.

Comma (*Polygonia c-album*) - the first was seen on the 25th February with 2 seen throughout March.

MAMMALS

Otter (*Lutra lutra*) - one was seen by two observers on the 20th March swimming across the water from Middle Hide before getting out and running over the land for a clear view. No doubt Otters use the river but how often do they use the Reserve?

Stoat (*Mustela erminea*) - one was seen at least 3 times throughout March.

Weasel (*Mustela nivalis*) - Far fewer sightings compared to Stoat, one was seen on the 28th March.

Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*) - up to 5 were seen hunting over the water at Middle Hide one evening on a calm warm evening on the 21st March.

FUNGI & PLANTS

Thimble Morel (*Verpa conica*) - a small group were again found along the meadow trail on the 24th March.

King Alfred's Cakes (*Daldinia concentrica*) - a common species nationally but it grows almost exclusively on Ash, a specimen was found on the reserve growing on Willow.

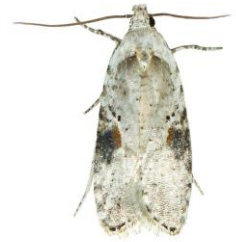
Scarlet Elf Cup (*Sarcoscypha coccinea* agg.) - a single dried specimen was found along the meadow trail on the 24th March.

Sweet Violet (*Viola odorata*) - a small clump of the native variety was growing along the meadow trail through March.

Rue-leaved Saxifrage (*Saxifraga tridactylites*) - lots of this small plant growing along the edge of the road during March.

Photos: From top to bottom - Brown-spot Flat-body, Grey-shoulder Knot, Clouded Drab and Thimble Morel.

Review by David Winnard



Marbury Country Park 8th Dec

Marbury Country Park lies in the heart of Northwich Community Woodlands, an integral part of the Mersey Forest. Eight of us met in the car park, the weather was not too cold with the promise of some sunshine.

We wandered through the Park in the direction of the old Hall, birds noted on the way included Crow, Coal tit, Goldcrest, Great tit and Nuthatch. On reaching the old Hall, there are only bits of masonry left of what was a fine-looking house modelled on the French chateau at Fontainebleau, as we turned towards Budworth Mere, we had Bullfinches fly over and Chaffinches in the trees.

Directly in front of the hide we had a good display of woodland birds together with a female Reed Bunting and a Kingfisher that obligingly sat on a low branch immediately in front of the hide. On the mere itself good numbers (40+) Great Crested Grebes, Shovelers, Tufted ducks and 2 female Goosanders. We were at that stage joined by Ros and Bob who had seen a Great Spotted Woodpecker in the car park. Bob thought that he had caught sight of the elusive Bittern on the edge of the reeds but after intense scrutiny we failed to find the bird. Andrew had a nice-looking male Bullfinch to the left of the hide. There were seventy Canada geese, later to be joined by forty Graylags on the far side of the mere. Lapwing, Curlew and thirty Coot were on the adjacent field at the edge of the mere, along with Common, Black-headed and Herring gulls.

Walking back to the car park, via the boathouse, a solitary male Goldeneye provided a pleasant diversion.



After lunch, and having been joined by Stella, we made our way to Neumann's Flash. The rain arrived but didn't dampen our enthusiasm as Corinne spotted a nice flock of Redwing in the trees and grass to the side of the path. Two Mistle Thrushes and one Song Thrush completed our count of thrushes for the day. Two Green Sandpipers were on Hadyn's Pool and we heard Treecreeper and Goldcrest on the way up to the pool, shortly after we had good views of the Treecreeper.

The rain had really set in by the time we got to Neumann's Flash but there were good numbers of Lapwing, Teal, assorted gulls and several pairs of Shoveler, with five Wigeon on the small island

We had a fast gallop back through the park in the pouring rain but decided we'd had a good day's birding - 43 species recorded - and excellent company to round off our 2018 Deeside Nats birding year, which produced a total of 112 species.

Many thanks to Norma Williams for the photograph of the Green Sandpiper and to Andrew Wallbank for the Bullfinch.



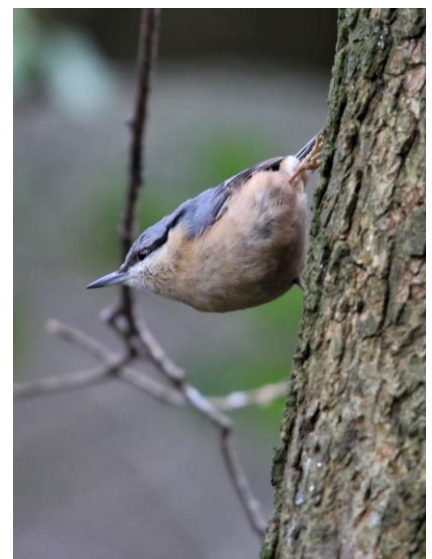
Bill Dickinson

Llanfairfechan & Spinnies 13th Jan

On arriving at the promenade at Llanfairfechan, our first port of call, we had good views of Puffin Island and Pennon Point, beyond a calm sea. 250 hectares of sand and mud habitats can be seen, which are important feeding grounds for many native and migratory bird species, such as Shelducks, waders, Oyster Catchers, Curlews, Lapwing and large flocks of over 5,000 Wigeon.

We assembled on the promenade and the morning was spent viewing from Llanfairfechan promenade, a walk through Glan y Mor Elias to the edge of Morfa Madryn. On the tide line there were flocks of Oystercatchers, a few Curlew; Herring, Great Black Backed and Black Headed gulls. On the sea there were several Great Crested Grebes. Any chance of looking for a possible Dipper on the Afon Llanfairfechan was scuppered when a dog walker sauntered up and through the water course.

The promenade was followed by a walk to Morfa Madryn local nature reserve, the reserve is an important nesting site for lapwing and attracts a good variety of birds all year round. We walked to the railway level crossing and over to the sewage works and were rewarded with six Pied Wagtails and four Grey Wagtails. On the way back to the cars we had good sightings of Teal, several Redshanks, Greenshank, Goosander, a brief view of a Kingfisher and Little Egrets. Whilst we were watching a flock of some thirty Wigeon grazing on the salt marsh they disappeared as one into the gutter. Strange? The answer was a Peregrine, performing a low flypast, four foot above the marsh immediately over the top of where they were a second earlier. This reserve is well worth a longer visit.



The group then made their way to the Spinnies nature reserve, Aberogwen, a mix of wetland and woodland adjacent to the Ogwen Estuary and Traeth Lavan on the coastal plain of North Gwynedd. The reserve is managed by North Wales Wildlife trust.

On the sea there were Shelduck, Red Breasted Merganser, Great Crested grebe and Golden Eye on the incoming tide. On the shore were Little Egret, Curlew, Dunlin, Oystercatchers and Turnstone. Within the reserve there were tits; Coal, Great and Blue, Chaffinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Greenfinch and a Nuthatch around the numerous feeders. The pool provided us with views of Greenshank, Water Rail, Little Grebe and Teal. Again, we were treated to a sight of the resident Kingfisher, giving exceptional views as it fed from one of the feeders by the main hide.

Returning to the car park we had good numbers of Redwings, Crows and Rooks in the adjacent fields.

Thanks to those members who joined me for the day. We enjoyed seeing a good variety of almost fifty species of birds.

Thanks to Alan Smethurst for the photographs.

Bill Dickinson

Big Pool Wood & Point of Ayr 24th Mar

Big Pool Wood's boardwalk and bird hide allow you to get particularly close to wildlife at this lovely little reed bed and woodland nature reserve. The site is part of the Dee Estuary Special Protection Area – a protected region that supports over 120,000 waterfowl and waders in the winter. Big Pool Wood both provides shelter and cover for some of these wetland birds and forms part of a wildlife corridor that stretches along the coast all the way to Anglesey; particularly important for migrating birds of all kinds.



When we arrive at the solitary hide on the western edge of the pool there was a distinct lack of bird life possibly due to the rather strong winds on the day. However, a stroll through the woodland margins gave sightings to a fair few woodland birds, Blue, Great and Long Tail tits, Dunnock and Nuthatch. The pool itself was very quiet with only a pair of Canada geese and coots (audio only!). A fleeting appearance by a Great Spotted woodpecker at one of the feeding stations along with a very happy and melodious Robin.

Point of Ayr reserve is a mosaic of naturally formed coastal habitats, with sand and shingle beach, dunes and saltmarsh all supporting important wildlife at different times of the year. The nature trail follows a sea wall with elevated views across the saltmarsh, The dunes and saltmarsh support various songbirds.



Our first wildlife sighting on leaving the car park at Talacre were three ornamental goldfish in a small pool next to the path !!! The small copse inland of the sea wall and the small lake beyond gave us views of Chiffchaff, Widgeon, Tufted Duck and a well populated rookery.

From the RSPB hide on the south western flank of the Dee estuary we had excellent views of Oystercatcher (1000), Curlew (200) and a mixture of Herring, Black backed and Great black backed gulls (200+ in all) and Cormorant.

The saltmarsh gutters provided some refuge from the windy conditions for small quantities of Redshank, Greenshank, Pintail and Mallard. Shell duck loitered close to shore and a distant Guillemot passed through. Skylark delighted us throughout the day and we had fleeting sightings of Wheatear and Pied Wagtail. Thank you to all members who turned up on a beautifully sunny but rather windy day.



Alan Smethurst

Field Meetings 2019

Saturday 27th APRIL, **RSPB LEIGHTON MOSS**, Spring migrants and woodland birds. Bring RSPB membership cards. Meet at the Allen and Morecambe hide car park, off New Rd, Warton at 10.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Saturday 11th MAY, **YNYS HIR RSPB AND CORS DYFI**, estuary, woodland birds and osprey. Bring RSPB membership cards. Meet in Ynys Hir car park, off A487 at 10.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Thursday 13th JUNE, **LLANDEGLA FOREST**. Nightjars. **EVENING MEETING** 8.00pm at Llandegla Forest visitor centre (SJ240524). Contact Bob Lane 07985704963/01352770633 for more details.

Sunday 30th JUNE, **SOUTH STACK AND CEMLYN BAY**, sea bird spectacular. Bring RSPB membership cards. Meet South Stack car park at 10.00am. Contact Steve Palin 01248 471116 for more details.

Sunday 11th AUGUST, **RHYDYMWAN AND COED Y FELIN**, woodland birds. Meet at 10.00am in the car park, Nant Alyn Rd off the A 541 (SJ205689). Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Sunday 15th SEPTEMBER, **CONNAH'S QUAY RESERVE**, high tide watch, Members day, Meet Field Study Centre at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Sunday 24th NOVEMBER, **GREENFIELD PARK AND DOCK**. Woodland and estuary birds. Meet at Greenfield Park car park, off Greenfield Rd at 9.00am. Contact Alan Smethurst 07896758222 for more details.

Sunday 8th DECEMBER, **DEE MARSHES**, a walk out onto the marsh, birds and beer. Meet Quayside, Little Neston, just after the Harp public house, at 9.00am. Bring wellingtons. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Please consider car sharing where possible.

Bill Dickinson

Indoor Meetings 2019

Friday September 20th: Kelvin Jones, 'Hawfinches'

Friday October 18th: Kevin Briggs, 'Confessions of a lunatic'

Friday November 15th: A.G.M.

Corinne Williams

Club Corner

DNS PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

The group continues to attract around twenty members to meetings, which take place on the second Wednesday of each month at 2pm in the Field Study Centre. Typically, we look at different aspects of photography and weather permitting we have photography forays around the Reserve. For information on the group please contact Phil Hotchkiss on 07773 333 346

DNS ART GROUP

We are a small group of members who enjoy painting together each month. We paint in various mediums and gain stimulation and encouragement from each other. If you would like to join us, you would be most welcome. Our meetings are on the second Thursday of the month in the Field Study Centre from 1-30 until 3-30 pm. Contact Kay Mattocks on 01244 821810

WEDNESDAY GROUP

This group meets at the Field Study Centre on the first and the third Wednesday of the month between 1.00 – 3.00 pm. It is an informal gathering of members who usually have lunch and then go for a short ‘walk and talk’ on the reserve, before returning for a final cup of tea. Topics of discussion range from the flora and fauna found on the reserve to local, national and international issues.

Digital Media

The password for the members area is applicable until 2020

User Name	dnsuser
Password	kmxv9854

Web site: www.deenats.org.uk

Email address: webeditor@deenats.org.uk

Facebook page: THE MEMBERS OF DEESIDE NATURALIST SOCIETY