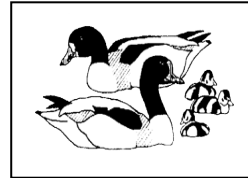


Newsletter



Issue 152

April 2020

Registered Charity No. 510146

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Newsletter.

Due to the ongoing problems with the Corvid-19 virus we have taken the decision to cancell all indoor meetings and field meetings until further notice. The Reserve will remain CLOSED until further notice.

After a somewhat quiet and uneventful weather scene the Reseve took a few knocks from the first winter storm of the year when Storm Ciara raced through. As would be expected we had some damage incurred to screening and water ingress to some hides by the driving rain. Contractors have been approached to replace the damaged screens, and will hopefully install a more suitable foundation.

Water ingress to the West hide will hopefully be solved when EON carry out the proposed painting of the outside. Whilst on the subject, can members please remember to close windows and doors when vacating the hides, especially those facing NW in the West hide.

We have received a kind donation from the family of late member Thomas Harold Fenwick and at the last meeting the Committee has decided to use the money to purchase a moth trap which we will hold in the Field Study Centre, This will be a most useful tool to increase our knowledge of the Lepidoptera both resident or passing through the Reserve. Many, many thanks.

Can I remind members who have not yet done so that your 2020 membership renewal is well overdue. This will be the last Newsletter sent out to anyone who hasn't renewed.

We have been asked "why no litter bins in the hides?" . The simple answer is that it needs someone to monitor and empty them so the policy on the Reserve is to ask you to please take all unwanted wrappers and litter home with you. Thanks.

Alan Smethurst

Reserve Report Nov'19-Mar'20

Winter on the reserve is an opportunity to observe visiting wildfowl and waders. Ducks and waders use the pools for feeding and roosting and are best viewed from the hides.

Thousands of Pink-footed geese use Burton marsh and together with wintering harriers are easily seen from the west hide.

The rest of the reserve is used by over wintering passerines including Robins, Blackbirds, Redwings and Fieldfares and is one of the few sites to see Twite.

Sightings:

November 5th. Ten Barnacle geese on Oakenholt marsh.

November 7th. Goldeneye male (later joined by a female on 11th.) Ash pool.

November 19th. Large numbers of passage Redwing and Fieldfare stripping the hawthorn.

November 21st. Seventy Common Snipe from Middle hide.

December 9th. Water Pipit briefly below West hide.

December 15th to January 23rd, 150 plus Pied wagtails in West field.



Peter Haslem

December 16th. Large fall of Blackbirds included a single Ring Ouzel, Found by Dave Winnard and observed by a lucky few at the Field Study Centre.

December 22nd. Brent goose on Oakenholt marsh.

Throughout December. Three to five hundred Knot together with twelve Bar-tailed Godwit on tideline was an exceptional count for the reserve.

December 29th. A Great Black-backed gull was identified as one ringed on the Calf of Man as a pullus on 24/06/2015 then reported from Bullock Harbour, Co. Dublin on 29/8/15 and from Skerries, also Co. Dublin on 1/8/18.

December 29th. Five Red-legged partridge, possibly a local release, seen by Dave Jones.

From November 16th to January 28th. Two then one overwintering Avocet on the tide line between West hide and Flint point were seen consistently.

January 10th. Two Marsh Harriers quartered the Ash pool.

January 13th. Ruddy Shelduck briefly by Sue Haslem on Oakenholt marsh.

January 22nd. Twenty-five Twite on the car park near the West hide became regular visitors. although a significant reduced count compared to previous years.

January 20th. Common Sandpiper from East hide.

January 26th. Male Hen harrier seen hunting across the reserve and targeting Redshank on the Dee Bunded pool.

January 28th. 450 Jackdaws on west field attracted by food put out by farmer for sheep. 200 plus each day in January.

January. Two thousand Black-tailed Godwits present daily.



Peter Haslem

Peter & Sue Haslem

Neston Marshes Dec 10th

The Dee Marshes at Denhall Old Quay is a vast salt marsh beside a former colliery; this unique setting provides the perfect combination of stunning landscapes and rich wildlife. This is an excellent viewpoint over the marsh and nearby Denhall gutter. The RSPB ensure the salt marsh and mudflats remain the best possible home for the thousands of wetland birds that return to the estuary each winter.

The conditions on setting out were cool and blustery but as we stepped onto the marsh we had a tremendous view of a Marsh Harrier which was then joined by a Peregrine, viewed through the telescope at the same time.

Numerous skeins of Pink Foot Geese, which were flying over our heads were seen throughout our time on the marsh. There were Canada Geese on the marshes and one party that flew past had a solitary Barnacle Goose trying to keep up with the rest. The marsh also held large flocks of Wigeon which would suddenly erupt from the saltwater pools and take to the air, often with Peregrine or Marsh Harrier above. Other birds around the pools were Teal, Mallard and Shoveler together with Curlew, Redshank, Little and Great White Egrets. We were also treated to the occasional Skylark taking flight from the marsh.

As we returned to the cars for a well earned hot drink and sandwich the heavens opened – good timing.



After the heavy shower abated we took the footpath going to Neston Old Quay with Neston Reed Bed on the edge of the marsh to our left and Neston sewage farm inland to our right. You can still see the sandstone quay which was used during the 19th and 20th century by Neston Colliery.

Due to the weather conditions small birds were scarce, we had good views of a perched Buzzard adjacent to the sewage works and a Kestrel that was alternating between the ground and a tree by the new kissing gate.

On returning to the cars we changed footwear, the wellingtons had been a necessity, and retired to the Harp Inn to discuss the day's birding and put the world to right.

Many thanks to all those who came along for the last field meeting of the year.

Bill Dickinson

DNS Wildlife Report

It was a quiet winter period for the Reserve in terms of records of other wildlife, the most fascinating records were of fungi and mosses.

On the 6th January we welcomed the members of the Warrington Plant Group and the North Wales non-flowering Plant Group to come and record the mosses and liverworts that are found on the Reserve. To understand the Reserve we must collect as much data on the species that are actually present there. Whilst birds have been recorded well, there are many important groups of wildlife where little or no recording has taken place at all, so hopefully we can change that.

MOSS

The event of the 6th was the building block for more records and hopefully the finding of more species on the Reserve and although some are very common here are a few things found on the day. All records from 6th Jan 2020.

COMMON ALOE-MOSS (*Aloina aloidies*) – this was the most unusual find of the day and is growing in the car park at the West hide, most of you have probably walked on it and never known it was there, it seems to have a preference for more alkaline soils which is reflected in the stone used on the car park.

SILVER-MOSS (*Bryum argentium*) - a common moss on the Reserve and once pointed out you would wonder how you missed it. It grows on the tarmac around the Field Centre as well as along the Meadow Trail (and no doubt all along the road).

LATERAL CRYPHEA (*Cryphaea heteromalla*) – this species is rather attractive under the hand lens, a fine specimen was growing on a Cherry tree along the Meadow Trail.

GREY CUSHIONED GRIMMEA (*Grimmia pulvinata*) - a few clumps of this were growing next to the railway line along the Meadow Trail.

FUNGI

SCARLET ELF CUP (*Sarcosypha austriaca*) – a species many will know about but may not know that there are actually two species that it could be: Ruby Elf Cup (*Sarcosypha coccinea*) and the Scarlet Elf Cup (*Sarcosypha austriaca*), both are pretty much identical and can only be identified under the microscope. I can confirm the latter, the true Scarlet Elf Cup was found on the Reserve in January on well rotted wood.

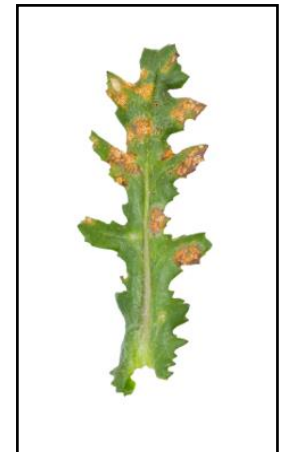
VELVET SHANK (*Flammulina velutipes*) - a fine display along the Meadow trail in January on well rotted wood.

TURKEYTAIL (*Trametes versicolor*) - an increase of this species compared to recent years, perhaps as the wood it likes gets to the correct rotting stage.

YELLOWING KNIGHT (*Tricholoma scalpuratum*) – due to the mild winter there were still some of these mushrooms fruiting near the Dee hide on 15th January.

GROUNDSEL CLUSTERCUP RUST (*Puccinia lagenophorae*) – a few plants of Groundsel near the Reserve entrance were infected with this common fungus in January.

FIRERUG INKCAP (*Coprinellus domesticus*) – a large number of this species has been found throughout January.



MOTHS

EARLY MOTHS (*Theria primaria*) – the only moth I have managed to record this year before the lock down. Seven of these moths were flying around at dusk on 9th January. Once the world returns to normality I would like to organise a moth morning on the Reserve for those wanting to learn more about these amazing insects.

Photos in descending order:

The spore of Scarlet Elf Cup; Turkeytail; Groundsel Clustercup Rust; Early Moth *all by David Winnard*

David Winnard

Beddmanarch Bay and Inland Sea 12th Jan

The above was the title in the programme that I compiled last year, but things change in the birding world...read on.

We assembled at the Penrhos Coastal Park car park on a rapidly brightening morning – the rain had been lashing down two hours earlier at Connah's Quay. We began by looking over the bay, which was an hour short of the full tide; we had Slavonian Grebes, Red Breasted Mergansers, Goldeneye and numerous Great Crested Grebes. From the car park we made our way along the causeway to the Inland Sea, after only a few metres we noticed a Rock Pipet flying short distances at the bottom of the causeway wall.

Just beyond the sea water gushing through the flume we saw a Shag, performing the clear leap as it dives. In the southern corner of the bay, before we crossed the A55, there was a small group of Turnstones, a couple of Redshanks and a lone Greenshank. The Inland Sea had a number of Great Crested Grebes, Goldeneye and Slavonian Grebes and on the far side of the water were several Grey herons and Great Black Backed gulls. Around the cottages were Great Spotted Woodpecker, Mistle Thrush and Greenfinch.



After having lunch at the Coastal Park we made our way to the next venue, Kentucky Fried Chicken on the Holyhead retail park! There had been reports of a Hooded Crow being seen around KFC and yes, there it was, duly sitting on top of a street lamp. If only birding was always that easy.



After the chicken course we decided on fish for the next course – Holyhead fish dock. There had been reports of a Black Guillemot showing well over the last few days, black maybe in its plumage in summer but in winter the bird is predominately white with barring above. So very different. Also around were Red Breasted Mergansers, Great Crested Grebes (we counted 20 in one flotilla) and Oystercatchers with Curlew and Ravens in the air.

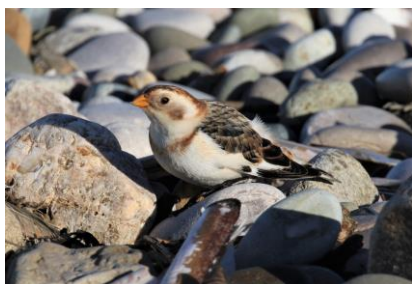
Our last stop of the day was Cemlyn Bay, a Long Tailed duck had been reported on a few occasions. The bay which is a hive of activity during the spring and summer is so very different in winter - it is quiet, no screaming gulls and terns, there is near silence. With regret I have to say we dipped on the Long Tailed duck but we did finish the birding day with Wigeon, Goldeneye, Teal, Red Breasted Merganser, Little Egret, another Black Guillemot, Ringed Plover and a flypast of forty Golden Plover.

I would like to thank all of those that came along on this voyage of discovery, for a very good day's birding and to Steve Palin for his local knowledge.

Bill Dickinson

Horton's Nose & Brickfield Pool 9th Feb

It was one of those days when it was touch and go whether the field meeting would go ahead, Storm Ciara had battered the Country for the past twenty four hours and was set to do the same throughout Sunday, but always up for a challenge we set out. Having met in the harbour car park we set out along the boardwalk in the search of our first target bird, the Snow Bunting. Walking on the path beside the caravan park we saw Meadow Pipits sheltering by the side of the palisade fencing and turnstones on the shingle bank. The waves were crashing onto the shore and a couple of large tree trucks were being tossed about like match sticks by the sea.



Turning around and walking back along the shingle bank on Horton's Nose, this area is named after Mr. W Horton who in the early 1900's owned the land. The wind was now at our backs and it was easier going, there were good numbers turnstones and Ring Plovers, then up popped two Snow Buntings from a mass of flotsam. We watched as they continued foraging for food. As we approached the tip of Horton's Nose where the River Clwyd enters the sea a flock of Sanderling were on the edge of the waves running like clockwork, keeping one step in front of the incoming wave.

Our next stop was the Marine Lake, we took shelter under a large canopy that was projecting from one of the industrial unit, which was fortunate for us as the strength of the wind increased and the heavens suddenly opened. On the lake was a party of ten Red Breasted Mergansers, whilst sheltering on the island were Oyster Catchers, Redshanks, Black Tailed Godwits and a couple of Great Black Backed gulls.

The final stop of the morning was a new one for me, Brickfield pond on the outskirts of Rhyl, this small nature reserve began life as a clay pit before the material was extracted and filled with water, to form a fishing lake. It was a surprise to find eight Goosanders, a real bonus. The target bird for this site was a Greater Scaup and there it was head down, not making it too easy to spot, with a group of Tufted Ducks. Walking around the lake we noted a variety of smaller birds, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Long Tailed tits and five Bull finches. Alan later saw a Kingfisher.



I would like to thank the other two birders (idiots-I'm sure they won't mind) who turned out in the extreme weather that has been a factor of this winter.

Bill Dickinson

Field Meetings 2020

AS THE LOCKDOWN IS IN PLACE UNTIL AT LEAST 30th APRIL I HAVE INCLUDED THE LIST OF MEETINGS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE YEAR IN THE UNLIKELY HOPE THAT MAYBE WE WILL GET TO FULFILL SOME OF THEM.

Sun 10th May- MINERA AND CLYWEDOG VALLEY. A recently opened NWWT site. Starting in the old Minera Lead Quarry, scanning the open quarry faces for ravens and raptors, we will then have a riverside stroll. Meet in the reserve's car park (SJ258519) at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121

Thurs 25th JUNE-LLANDEGLA FOREST. Nightjars. EVENING MEETING 8.30pm at Llandegla Forest visitor centre (SJ240524). Members please email - membership@deenats.org.uk - to book because numbers may be limited. Contact Bob Lane 07985704963/01352770633

Sun 12th JULY - WILDLIFE RECORDING DAY. A guided walk of our Reserve looking at the flowers, fungi, insects, birds and with even the possibility of setting up some camera traps. Meet at the FSC car park at 9.00am. Contact Dave Winnard 07533 132 129

Sun 23rd AUGUST-LLANFAIRFECHAN AND MORFA MADRYN. For returning waders and sea birds. A short walk will take us to an area of salt marsh with a shingle spit and beyond this the pools of Morfa Madryn Nature Reserve. Meet at FSC 8.00am for car share, prompt. Meet in the beach car park by the Pavillion Cafe, off junction 15, A55 at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson on 07968438121

Sun 6th SEPTEMBER-HILBRE ISLAND. Hilbre over high tide, waders, terns and skuas. Meet at West Kirby Sailing Centre, Dee Lane (SJ213869) at 9.00 am. Contact Alan Smethurst 07896758222

Sun 15th NOVEMBER -PARKGATE. High tide watch as the incoming tide forces the birds into viewing range. Meet at FSC 8.30 prompt. Meet at the Old Baths Car Park at 9.00am. Contact Alan Smethurst 07896758222

Sun 6th DECEMBER-CONWAY RSPB AND ESTUARY. Winter ducks and waders. Meet at FSC 8.00am for car share, prompt. Meet at the RSPB car park at 9.00am. Bring RSPB membership card. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121

Indoor Meetings 2020

Friday September 18th: Ron Plummer "Heads and Tails" – a visit to Chile and Easter Island

Friday October 16th: Giles Pepler: "TBC" (WOS and the new birds in Wales book).

Friday November 13th: AGM

Club Corner

DNS PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

The numbers of members attending the group has dropped to 3 or 4 people and if you wish for this group to continue we would like to see a few more members attending when this Covid-19 situation is over Thanks.

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.

PLEASE NOTE: DUE TO THE OUTBREAK OF THE CORVID-19 VIRUS ALL GROUP MEETING ARE CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

Digital Media

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Facebook page: THE MEMBERS OF DEESIDE NATURALIST SOCIETY