



Issue 159

Registered Charity No. 510146

Welcome to the April edition of the Newsletter, with thanks to Bill Dickinson, Andy Perkin, Peter Haslem and Joseph Maskrey for their contributions this month.

There is still a vacancy on the Committee for another member. If you are interested in becoming involved in the future direction of the Society please contact the secretary on: secretary@deenats.gov.org

The Committee would once again like to remind members that the broadcasting on social media and forums of rarities sighted on the Reserve is absolutely discouraged due to previous issues resulting in a surge of unauthorised people descending on the site and consequently raising the associated safety and security issues. This is in breach of the arrangement we have with our landlords and could ultimately result in the Society being refused access to the site completely.

As has been mentioned in previous Newsletters, fairly major works have been planned for the lagoon sluice gates, the breach in the bund between the Middle and East hides and the dredging of the Lead brook next to the West hide. Funding that had been earmarked by Uniper for the works on the banded pool area has now gone due to the company being nationalised by the German government. Alternative funding is now being looked into and any commencement of work will be greatly influenced by any conditions imposed due to the area being SSSI designated.

Some work has been carried out on the Lead brook to remove a blockage in the culvert beneath the railway line. The need to proceed with the dredging of the stream down to the river Dee is now being re-assessed.

It is believed a planning application has been submitted to Flintshire CC to use broken bank (the revetment and adjoining reclaimed land on the NE side of the river) for off road motorcycling. The Committee has expressed an opinion that it is most likely to oppose any such application, as are our local beekeepers who use the area for the location of some of their hives.

PLEASE NOTE: The field Meeting to Minera Quarry and Clwydog Valley has been pushed back a week and will now take place on Wednesday, 26th April. The meeting place and time remain unchanged

Greenfield Valley & Docks 10th Dec 2022

Greenfield valley was the site of extremely intensive industrial activity from the sixteenth century onwards, principally due to the constant flow of water (approximately 4000 gallons a minute) that emerged from the ground at 46 degrees Fahrenheit and thus was never subject to freezing, ideal for all year-round water generated power. Although there are still major signs of past industry, the steep sided valley is now a haven for nature with a good number of mill pools along the valley floor

Five brave souls turned up in what was really unfavourable conditions for birding, cold, dull with a profusion of sleet and snow.

We proceeded up the eastern side of the valley, skirting the edges of the ponds, much of the birdlife hunkered down with the poor weather, we did however have sightings of Moorhen, Little grebe, Mallard, Robin, Dunnock, Herring and Black headed gull and a pair of resident Mute swans. Crossing over one of the dams to the western side of the valley we saw a variety of the common woodland birds including Redwing ground foraging on the adjacent meadow.

During what turned out to be only a temporary respite in the weather we made our way down to the Greenfield docks where we encountered Goldfinch, Starlings, Oyster catcher, Turnstone and four very handsome ground feeding Song thrushes close to the sewage works bringing our species total for the day to 23.

Thanks to the members who forfeited their warm fireside chairs for a spot of cryotherapy! Unfortunately, the weather was not conducive to photography.

Alan Smethurst`

Nest Boxes 2023

Due to spinal surgery just at the wrong time of the year I was unable to do any box observations during incubation/fledging, so the following is merely a list of occupancy for last summer's local nesting activity observed during cleaning/sterilising this winter.

	boxes	used	
DNS	38	29	(4 unhatched eggs)
<i>(3 boxes occupied by woodmice and the kestrel box taken over by a squirrel.)</i>			
Cheshire farm	17	15	(1 unhatched egg)
Park Farm	6	5	
Kelsterton farm	6	5	(1 dead adult)
Oakenholt papermill	7	5	(6 dead chicks)
Top-y-Fron hall	13	11	(3 unhatched eggs, 4 dead chicks)

At the request of one of their Governors, in December we installed 5 nest boxes in the nature area to the rear of Ysgol Owen Jones primary school, Northop.

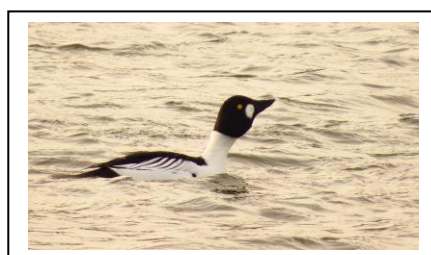
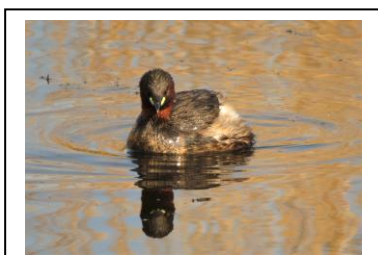
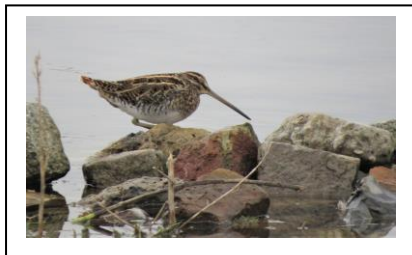
Betty Lee/Alan Smethurst

Seaforth 24th Jan 2023

The nature reserve is one of a number in the portfolio of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, nestled in the heart of the Liverpool Docks at the mouth of the Mersey, Seaforth, with its industrial charm, is an important part of the Mersey narrows special protection area and a major roosting site for a spectacular variety of waders, seabirds, ducks and small birds.

For the first meeting of 2023 eleven members met in the car park at Crosby Marina and began the day walking towards the shore with the marine lake on our right. Seen on the lake were gulls, black headed, herring, lesser-black backed and great-black backed, together with a few male goldeneyes and teal. On the edge of a small area of wet scrub, a heron's head was noted moving amongst the reeds. Looking through the fencing into the reserve there were many ducks and waders including a large flock of knot.

On the shore there was a lot of disturbance, people walking, exercising dogs and metal detectorists, the only things not causing a disturbance were Anthony Gormley's statues! There were still a few birds around, redshanks, oystercatchers on the shoreline and curlew, dunlin and cormorants doing a flypast. Around the far side of the lake was a small pond that held shelduck, little grebe and tufted duck. The last birds seen before leaving the site were song thrush, pied wagtail and little egret.



We went in convoy the short distance to the Port of Liverpool where we all had to go into the police office to be issued with our passes. Then finally onto the reserve, our first bird was a brief glimpse of a grey wagtail, this was followed by four pochard, in what turned out to be Pochard Bay. Lunch called and we went to the hide overlooking Long Bank. On this raised part of the reserve which was grass and half a dozen small ponds were shoveler, teal, curlew, ten pied wagtails, and rabbits bobbing about, all went quiet when a sparrowhawk flew across and to the side of the hide.

From the second hide which gave views of the freshwater and saltwater lagoons we had a close-up view of a snipe and saw red-breasted merganser, goldeneye, tufted duck, shelduck, shoveler and little grebe. Waders included redshank, dunlin, lapwing, curlew, turnstone, bar tailed and black tailed godwits, together with heron and little egret. Along with the normal gull suspects were twelve common gulls.

I believe that we had a good day, forty-five species seen. For some it was their first time at Seaforth, a very different reserve from many. I would like to thank Lancashire Wildlife Trust for their assistance in arranging the visit.

Bill Dickinson

Around and about - Big Pool Wood



Big Pool Wood is a little gem of a reserve and lies some 3 miles to the east of Prestatyn between the A548 and the Chester to Holyhead railway line. Access to the pool is from the roadside parking, down the lane opposite the 'Bells of St Mary's' restaurant at (SJ 102838) adjacent to the Bridlewood riding school.



The reserve covers an area of around 4 hectares and is made up of a reedbed and pool surrounded by deciduous wet woodland. There are three hides, two overlooking the pools/reedbeds and the other looking out into the woodland clearing. Wheelchair access is excellent with decking walkways and hard surface pathways. A number of benches and picnic tables are sited at favourable viewpoints to watch the birdlife. Two of the hides are wheelchair friendly whilst the third has a few steps to gain entry.

Look out for Water Rail and Kingfisher. Star appearance a couple of years ago was a Squacco heron.



Reserve Bird report Dec-Mar

Since the sheep stopped grazing on Oakenholt marsh it has become an important site for feeding and roosting geese. A count of 6000 Pink-footed geese in February included a Lesser White-fronted goose. Other sightings included an Emperor goose and a Russian White-fronted goose. The sea Asters and grasses are allowed to seed, providing a winter food source for our wintering finches including Twite, Linnet, Chaffinch and Gold finches.

The cold weather and snow brought green finches and chaffinches to our bird feeders and many members were lucky enough to see up to five Brambling during the harsh March cold.

Over a hundred Shoveler kept an area of the Ash pool ice free during December with a circular dance routine known as *vortex feeding*.

Two Cattle egret were seen on the food put out by the farmer for the sheep (07/12).

The Long-billed dowitcher was seen by S Skelton, from the West hide, briefly (26/02).

Spring has started on the reserve, with first records of Sand martin (15/03), a dozen Chiffchaff (18/03) and up to nine Wheatear (18/03).

Sightings.

December.

Ruddy Shelduck 6 (01/12), Avocet 3, Egyptian goose, Linnet 48, Black-tailed godwit 2500, Dunlin 3800, male Goldeneye, Barnacle geese 2, Shoveler 110, Cattle egret 2, Grey Plover, Redwing, Fieldfare, Merlin, Goosander, Knot 400, Starlings 2000, Pink-footed geese 4000, Twite 34, Spotted redshank 11, Skylark 30, Wigeon 950, and Teal 1600.

January.

Avocet, Grey plover 6, Twite 42, Merlin, Common sandpiper 2, Snipe 40, Greenshank, Linnet 40, Kingfisher, Gadwall, Reed bunting, Pied wagtails 100, Red-legged partridge, Knot, Shoveler, Russian White-fronted goose (05/01), Marsh harrier, Black-tailed godwit 800, Dunlin 3000, Goosander, Red-breasted merganser, Spotted redshank 3, Fieldfare, Mute swan 26 and Lapwing 2000.

February.

Ruddy shelduck 5, Knot 90, Stonechat, Avocet 2, Mediterranean gull, Lesser white-fronted goose (18/02), Pink-footed geese 6000, Snipe 28, Common sandpiper, Turnstone, Greenshank 9, Little egret 20, Greenfinch 30, Long-billed dowitcher (26/02), Emperor goose (28/02), Ruff and Black-tailed godwit 1200.

Pete and Sue Haslem.

Parkgate 21st Feb 2023

Our party of 14 assembled at Parkgate 'Old Baths' on the river Dee to witness the imminent ten metre plus tide and hopefully view a variety of raptors cashing in on the many rodents fleeing the rising water. As it turned out the weather was rather benign with high pressure sitting in the Irish Sea and an almost total absence of any favourable strong winds from the Northwest, resulting ultimately, in the tide falling short of the Old Baths wall.

As the high water was still over an hour away, we took a short circular walk up and along the Wirral Way, after a short while we crossed over the Heswall golf course then back to the riverbank, following it back to the car park. A paddock at the start of our walk yielded a solitary Redwing and a distant Greater Spotted Woodpecker drumming. Other encounters included a very elegant Buzzard, several Fieldfare and a happy Song Thrush occupying the topmost twig of a tree.



The saltmarsh was host to thousands of Pink Foot geese and with the advancing tide large flocks of them were lifting and resettling onto drier parts of the marsh, Marsh Harriers and Buzzards were wheeling and searching for prey and to everyone's great delight we were treated to a flyover by a Red Kite. Other sightings included a group of twelve Greenshank; small flocks of Skylark and Meadow Pipit; Egrets, both Little and Great; a large raft of Shelduck on the open water enjoying the company of a solitary Pintail.



After lunch we travelled down to Burton Mere Wetlands, buoyed by the fact that a long billed Dowitcher had been sighted there. As it turned out we did not achieve an encounter with it. The Visitor Centre lagoon produced a good range of ducks: Mallard, Shoveler, Widgeon, Teal, Gadwall, Shelduck and Tufted. A pair of Whooper Swans stayed a short while, whilst other sightings included spotted Redshank and Black Tailed godwit. The Bridge screen lagoon yielded many Canada geese and a pair of Barnacle geese.

From the Border hide we had views of Ruff, little Grebe and Greylag geese. For those not aware, the Reserve has introduced a small herd of horses to help in the management of the site.

Although it was a tad disappointing that the tide didn't encroach as far as expected it was an excellent day's birding with 63 species recorded in all. Many thanks to all who turned up today on a pleasantly mild late winter's day and to Phil, our recorder for the day.

Alan Smethurst

Morfa Madryn & Spinneys 25th Mar



Morfa Madryn lies to the west of Llanfairfechan and comprises approximately 250 hectares of sand, mud flats and saltwater lagoons and is an internationally important feeding ground for both native and migratory birds.

The days party was somewhat fragmented as some members arrived by train, meeting up later that morning, but all turned out well in the end.

From the promenade we observed gannets diving in the distance whilst on the Afon Llanfairfechan nearby Dipper and Grey wagtail were in attendance but no sign of the resident Kingfisher. The mile or so walk to the hides gave sightings of Merganser (10) in the lagoons, Ringed plover, Great Crested grebe and the joyful sight of a solitary early Swallow plus a number of Wheatears. One lucky member caught a fleeting glimpse of the kingfisher in flight near the westernmost hide emerging from behind a group of Greylag geese.



After lunch we travelled the short drive over to the Spinnies where we found the water levels in the lagoons rather high following the recent high tides, so we concentrated our time in the main hide. For those unfamiliar with the Spinnies, this hide is special in that it has the best of worlds with vastly differing habitats in two directions. To the east there is a deciduous wet woodland habitat incorporating lagoons, whilst viewing to the west of the hide offers tidal estuary and open water.

From this hide we had sightings of Chaffinch, Siskin, Goldfinch, Great, Blue and Coal tits, little Grebe, Dunnock and Moorhen in and around the woodland area. No sign of the Kingfisher which is generally a given for the Spinnies, but you can't win them all!

On the estuary side we were treated to a dozen Goldeneye and a distant sighting of three Sandwich terns. We also had good showings of Shelduck, Cormorant, Curlew and Great Crested grebe.



**We are all pretty familiar with our native butterflies,
but what about some of their caterpillars?**



Meadow brown



Swallowtail



Ringlet



Cabbage white



Comma



Pearl bordered Fritillary



Speckled wood



Green hairstreak



Brimstone



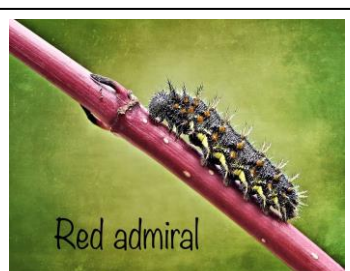
Small tortoiseshell



Red admiral



Peacock



Red admiral



Wall brown



Painted lady

Listed below are some examples of host plants that are attractive to each species of butterfly and subsequently allowing you to locate the likelihood of discovering particular butterflies and their corresponding caterpillars:

BRIMSTONE.....*Alder Buckthorn, Purging Buckthorn*

COMMON BLUE.....*Birdsfoot Trefoil*

CABBAGE WHITE.....*Brassicas*

SMALL & LARGE WHITES.....*Nasturtium*

COMMA.....*Elm, Hop, Willow and Currant*

SMALL COPPER.....*Docks & Sorrels*

ORANGE TIP, GREEN VEINED WHITE....*Garlic, Hedge mustard, Lady's Smock*

HOLLY BLUE....*Holly, Ivy*

PEACOCK, RED ADMIRAL, COMMA, SMALL TORTOISESHELL....*Stinging Nettle*

SPECKLED WOOD, WALL BROWN, GATEKEEPER, MEADOW BROWN,
MARBLED WHITE, RINGLET, SMALL HEATH, LARGE SKIPPER, SMALL
SKIPPER.....

Mixed grasses that have been grown as a meadow.

PAINTED LADY.....*Thistle.*

Some interesting caterpillar facts

The first meal a caterpillar enjoys is its own shell which is very rich in protein and provides the new larva with a really nutritional start in life.

Caterpillars are super body builders! They can have up to 4,000 muscles in comparison to humans who have around 650. Their heads alone can have up to 250 muscles!

You would think the caterpillar has oodles of legs, but in fact they only have three pairs of two along it's thoracic segment. The remainder are 'false' legs or prolegs which are used to help the larva to cling to surfaces.

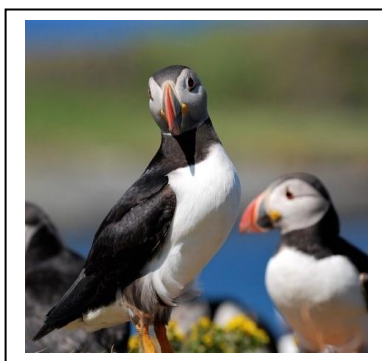
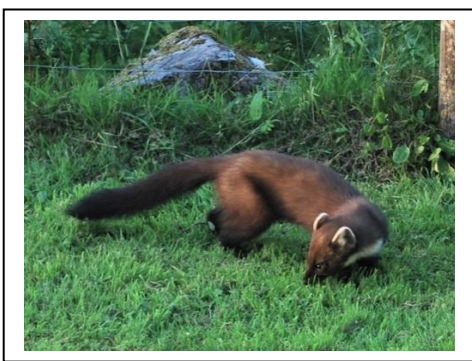
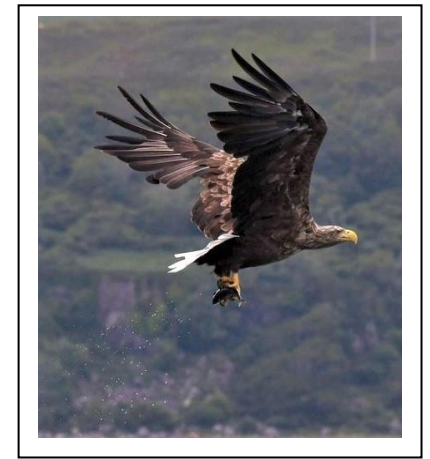
Avoiding becoming a tasty snack requires some crafty strategies. Some caterpillars look like bird droppings, twigs and bark, while others flaunt their presence with their display of bright colours to advertise how toxic they are. The Swallowtail caterpillar has a stink gland just behind the head which it can activate to deter potential predators.

"There's a one-eyed yellow monster to the north of Kathmandu" - Well the caterpillar clans can knock spots off that in that they have 12 eyes called *stemmata*, however their sight is very poor, the *stemmata* facilitating only the ability to differentiate between light and dark.

During its larval stage caterpillars grow a phenomenal amount, increasing their body mass by up to a thousand times and during the several weeks prior to reaching the pupal stage can eat up to 25,000 times their bodyweight. To achieve this intake, they will moult 5 or six

THE DELIGHTS OF THE ISLES OF SCOTLAND

A portfolio by Andy Perkin from his trips north of the border to Mull and surrounding areas. Some of the beauties we don't get to see too often.



Field Events 2023

Wednesday 26th APRIL, 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 for more details

Saturday 13th 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.

Saturday 10th JUNE, ELLESMERE AND COLEMERE. Excellent variety of habitat and wildlife. Meet at the Visitor Centre Ellesmere at 10.30am. Contact Keith Davies 01978760353 for more details.

Thursday 6th JULY, SOUTH STACK RSPB and CEMLYN BAY. spectacular nesting seabird extravaganza. Bring RSPB membership cards. Meet in the café car park at 9.30am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Sunday 20th AUGUST, RHYDYMWYN AND COED Y FELIN, woodland birds. Meet at 10.00am in the car park, Nant Alyn Rd off the A 541. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Saturday 16th SEPTEMBER, NORTH WALES COAST. A day's birding along the North Wales coast looking at migrating birds. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Tuesday 17th OCTOBER, CONWAY RSPB. and estuary. Bring RSPB membership cards. Meet at Conway reserve car park at 9.30am. Contact Alan Smethurst 07896758222 for more details.

Saturday 11th NOVEMBER, RIVER CLWYD. The stretch of the tidal River Clwyd between Rhyl and Rhuddlan provides good birdwatching, with close views of mudflats and river channel from either bank. Meet at the Rhyl Harbour car park, Horton Nose Lane. Contact Bill Dickinson on 07968438121

Sunday 9th DECEMBER, DEE MARSHES. a walk out onto the marsh, birds and a beer. Meet Little Neston Old Quay, just after the Harp public house, at 9.00am. Bring wellingtons. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Please car share where possible. Notices will be put on DNS Facebook page and the DNS website prior to the meetings

Bill Dickinson

Porpoise at Connah's Quay



This porpoise was spotted by a member of the public in the River Dee on the 14th March,. It stayed for a while just upstream from the power station before making its way out towards the estuary. Apologies for the poor quality distant phone shots.

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

Digital Media

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