

Issue 162

April 2024

Registered Charity No. 510146

Welcome to the April Newsletter.

The access problem with the disabled entrance to the West hide has now been resolved. The roller shutter is now fixed in the 'up' position.

We have been experiencing increasing problems with the windows in all the hides be it mechanical issues or difficulty opening and closing the units, so the Committee are looking into getting quotes for replacement units on all the hides.

Over the next decade the Society will be affected by major changes proposed by our landlords, UNIPER.

Recently, a number of our committee members met with UNIPER Management and were informed of the future plans for the power station. The existing station will continue to generate for back up power until at least 2030. Meanwhile, in consideration of the Government's 'net zero' policy the company are intending a major investment into a carbon capture plant. The turbines will again be powered by gas, but a major part of the CO2 produced will be captured and piped out to the now depleted gas field in Liverpool bay.

The new plant will be constructed in the eastern meadow between the gas plant and the heli-pad while the 'layout area' for equipment and materials will be the western meadow from the heli-pad to the Meadow trail. This western meadow will be reinstated to its original condition on completion of all the works. It is expected that there will need to be a realignment of the access road onto the Reserve, but we were assured access to the hides would not be affected. As the scheme is in planning/consultation stage it will be some years before any significant construction work commences.

With the viability of the UNIPER site assured the Society can now look at undertaking the in house works that have been held back on.

We will keep members fully updated with any ongoing developments as they arise.

The 2022 Bird Report for N E Wales (including our reserve) is now available as a full colour printed version in a limited edition of only 20 copies.

Maps and 22 colour photographs - £9

Obtainable from:

glenmanc@hotmail.com

Alan Smethurst

Dee Marshes December 9th 2023

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 an excellent viewpoint over the marsh and nearby Denhall Gutter. The RSPB ensures the salt marsh and mudflats remain the best possible home for the thousands of wetland birds that return to the estuary each winter.



Meeting in the car park there were skeins of pink foot geese over the marsh and a goldcrest and long tailed tits in the surrounding bushes and trees. As we stepped onto the marsh we had a tremendous view of a marsh harrier which was putting up flocks of teal and wigeon.

Further skeins of pink foot geese, which were flying over our heads, were seen throughout our time on the marsh. Other birds around the pools were teal, mallard, shoveler together with curlew, redshank, red breasted merganser, little and white egrets. We were also treated to the occasional skylark taking flight from the marsh.



Returning to the cars we saw a sparrowhawk gliding just above the reeds with a raven calling overhead.



After lunch we went on to Burton Mere Wetlands which had all the usual suspects, ducks including mallard, teal, wigeon, gadwall, shoveler, tufted duck and pintail. The waders were lapwing, redshank, ruff, black tailed godwits, curlew and dunlin and the star of the show a kingfisher. Over fifty species were seen on the day.

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

Bill Dickinson

Martin Mere – Jan20th 2024

The first field meeting of 2024 was to Martin Mere Wetlands centre which has wide open spaces and wetlands, the reserve is managed by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust during the winter months.

It is home to a host of swans ducks waders and geese.

The meeting was just prior to the storm Isha, with heavy skies, strong winds and slight drizzle, but it was a mainly dry day. Some of the smaller ponds were frozen but the main Mere was largely ice free.

Off to the birding, on the main Mere easily a hundred and fifty whooper swans, along with greylag geese, pintail, mallards and wigeon. The waders were black-tailed godwits, ruff and golden plover. Along to the Ron Barker hide and the highlight was seeing four marsh harriers, two really close, flapping and gliding over the marsh.

The next stop was the Janet Kear hide but, on the way, I was surprised that the Swan Link Hide had been demolished. The Janet Kear hide has a good number of bird feeders on which were twenty-four goldfinches, a range of tits and reed buntings on the ice under the feeders. Like our reserve the feeders came with a family of brown rats.

From the Harrier Hide were tufted ducks, shovelers, gadwall, pink foot geese and two grey herons in the air.



A long walk to the long meadow produced a herd of English long horn cattle, together with twenty cattle egrets, how fitting. 3pm and it was into the new Discovery Hide to watch the spectacle as thousands of wild birds are fed right in front of you and yes, yes, yes, the red breasted goose arrived! The advance on the scattered food was led by the shelduck after that it was a free for all.



By this time light was fading so the decision was taken to try to see brambling and barn owl that had been reported earlier in the day. I am pleased to say that two bramblings were spotted, with a flock of chaffinches along the track near to the Ron Barker Hide. The last bird of the day seen from the Kingfisher Hide was the barn owl out over the marsh.

What an excellent day the range of birds more than made up for a grey winter's day.

Bill Dickinson

Who we are



and what we do

Did you know that the DNS is a paid-up Affiliate of the Welsh Ornithological Society (WOS)? So who is WOS and why is the DNS involved? WOS is a small but influential registered charity with a growing membership of around 500 individual, family, and Young Birder members. It is governed by a Constitution and a Council of Trustees. The Trustees are responsible for running the Society and they are drawn from all over Wales, with a variety of different interests and experience in birds and their conservation. The Society's priorities are guided by a five-year strategy last reviewed and revised in 2020.

WOS is the national body to unify birdwatchers and ornithologists across the whole of Wales. WOS represents affiliated local and county bird clubs/groups with the country agencies, notably Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Welsh Government to help conserve birds in Wales. As the only solely Welsh-based organisation to do this, we actively support bird conservation in Wales, by funding research and encouraging publication of papers and articles related to birds in Wales. We encourage students to present their ornithological studies to a wider body of birders with an annual Student Award.

As an Affiliate of WOS, the DNS members receive a copy of the quarterly newsletter and publications of *Milvus*, which include the annual Welsh Bird Report, all of which are available via the DNS Committee. Records from the reserve contribute to the Welsh Bird Report and back copies of *Milvus* and the Welsh Bird Report are available on request. The DNS also receives advance notice of the annual WOS conference which in recent years has taken place at Aberystwyth University.

WOS encourages the monitoring and recording of birds in Wales, and the submission and compilation of these records at a vice-county level. These are brought together annually in the Welsh Bird Report. WOS also encourages birdwatchers in Wales to record their sightings using BirdTrack, of which WOS is a partner, and to participate in BTO and RSPB research projects.

The Welsh Birds Rarities Committee (WBRC) is a sub-committee of WOS Council and reports to it. The WBRC is charged with maintaining the Welsh bird list and for producing an annual report of accepted rare birds in Wales.

Five of the most evident outputs from the WOS each year are:

- an Annual National Conference.
- its three journals – *Milvus* (formerly *Birds in Wales*), the annual Welsh Bird Report and the annual Scarce and Rare Birds in Wales report.
- grants for research and fieldwork: a community grant scheme and WOS Young Conservationist Bursaries.
- an annual bird photography competition and
- Two main annual awards: the Lifetime Achievement Award and the Derek Moore Student Research Award. Both awards are presented at the Annual Conference.

WOS celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2019 and to mark this milestone, the Society has produced a new *Birds of Wales*, which was published in July 2021 and voted one of the ten best bird books of the year by the BTO/BB panel. Copies of this essential reference book are still available, and WOS holds a few copies for a reduced price (£20) from Ian Spence and Anne Brenchley.

Further information about WOS and its work can be found on:

www.birdsin.wales

Anne Brenchley, WOS Chair

Invertebrates on the Reserve - 2023



1 Stripe-legged Robberfly



2 Ichneumon Wasp – *Netelia* species



3 Bishop's Mitre Shieldbug



4 Hawthorn Shieldbug



5 Gorse Shieldbug, summer adult



6 Gorse Shieldbug, final instar



7. *Gasteruption* Wasp



8 Short-winged Conehead



9 Roesel's Bush-cricket

There often seems to be something new to find on the reserve when looking for invertebrates. The variety I have seen during wanders along the Meadow Trail, access road and gardener's compound continues to grow! In the May sunshine a handsome Stripe-legged Robberfly patiently watched any insect landing nearby and during August I encountered a fabulous orange Ichneumon wasp. After a little research I learned it was a *Netelia* species, which is a parasite of some moths. August was also good for shieldbugs and the very aptly-named Bishop's Mitre Shieldbug was a new species for me. Two large species were also present – Hawthorn Shieldbug and Gorse Shieldbug. Although I only saw summer adult Gorse shieldbugs on the reserve, I have seen spring adults and these are quite different! Nymphs of the shieldbugs can be confusing as they look so different from the adults, but a bit of googling informed me that these were final instar Gorse Shieldbug nymphs.

Also in August was a delicate little insect with an impossibly long ovipositor. This was a *Gasteruption* wasp – another parasitic species, but this time the host species are solitary bees and wasps.

The stars of the year had to be the bush-crickets that I saw in September, with a single Short-winged Conehead cleverly hidden on a blade of grass and a Roesel's Bush-cricket singing within the fenced area on the left just above the West Hide car park.

Julie Rogers

Out and About – *Hilbre Island*



The islands lying at the mouth of the Dee Estuary are a sandstone archipelago consisting of Hilbre, Middle eye and Little eye. They are situated approximately two miles west of the lifeboat station based at West Kirby.

With the Estuary being amongst the ten most important in the UK it is an important stopping point for birds migrating twice yearly along the west coast. Just a little way further west lies Hoyle bank, which at low water provides a haul out for many dozens of grey seals, who, once the bank is inundated with the incoming tide will venture over to Hilbre and pop their head up weighing up the human occupants of the island.

There is time between tides for a trip out and back but ideally you should aim to stay on the island over the high tide, the day trippers will have returned to west Kirby and with luck you will have the island to yourself for six hours.

It is IMPERATIVE that you allow 3 hours before high water to start your walk out to Hilbre (three and a half hours on spring tide),

Points to remember for a day on Hilbre:

There are NO shops

There is NO water

There is LITTLE shelter

There IS a chemical toilet

Make sure you have enough food and water, good footwear and waterproofs.

All in all it is a great day out with the bird life being driven in around you for 360 degrees.



Bird report Oct'23- Jan'24

The winter of 2023 was very wet and, consequently, the water levels on the Ash pool are very high and the island remains submerged. Last spring the island became a Black-headed gull nesting colony together with four pairs of Avocet.

The bunded pools, however, are tidal filling and emptying on a regular two weekly cycle. Deep water loved by the Wigeon and Teal and exposed mud banks appreciated by the waders.

Please take care not to stray from the footpaths and roads and try to keep your profile hidden using natural cover. It is good field craft, and you will see more birds as a result.

Bird Sightings.

October.

Water rail, 2 Kingfisher. 1000 Teal, 4000 Redshank, 3000 Black-tailed godwit, 10 Bar-tailed godwit, 4000 Knot, Grey plover, Lapwing, Common sandpiper, Wigeon, 5 Avocet, 60 Pintail, 20 Spotted redshank, 20 Snipe, 600 Dunlin, 31 Greenshank, Goosander.

November.

Goldeneye, 2 Marsh harrier, 3 Stonechat, 3000 Dunlin, 10 Ringed plover, 25 Linnet, 40 Greenfinch, Peregrine, Merlin, pair of Long-tailed ducks (J. Gilbody), Pink-footed geese, 1200 Starlings, 300 Chaffinch, 30 Reed buntings, 50 Goldfinch, 3000 Dunlin, 15 Shoveler

December.

2 Goldcrest, 72 Shoveler, 80 Curlew (sheep field), 12 Mute swan, 1000 Wigeon, 1100 Teal, Avocet, Grey plover, 7 Goosander, Redwing, 9000 Dunlin, 2 Marsh harrier, 2 Peregrine, 2 Hen harrier (m & f), 8 Waxwings, 5 Buzzard, Common sandpiper, 950 Knot, 1000 Lapwing, 85 Stock dove, 40 Woodpigeon, 22 Rook, 20 Magpie, 3 Turnstone, 35 Linnet, 120 Curlew.

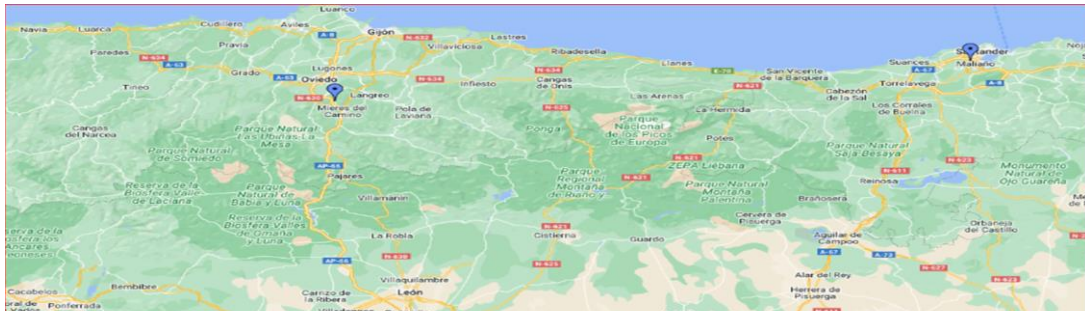
January.

24 Bar-tailed godwit, 10 Greenshank, 150 Jackdaw, 2000 Dunlin, 100 Pintail, 2500 Wigeon, American wigeon (A Lovatt), Kingfisher, Slavonian grebe, Stonechat, 20 Redwing, Common sandpiper, 1000 Lapwing, 100 Knot.

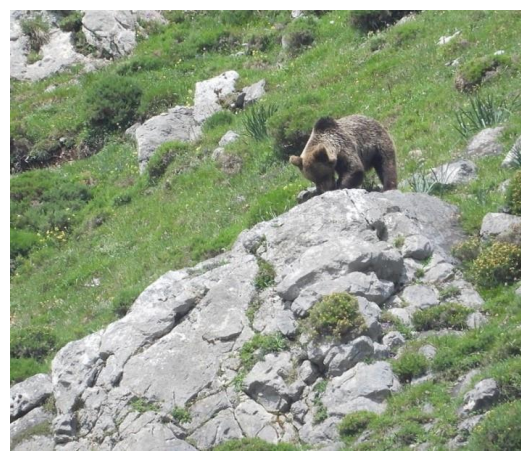
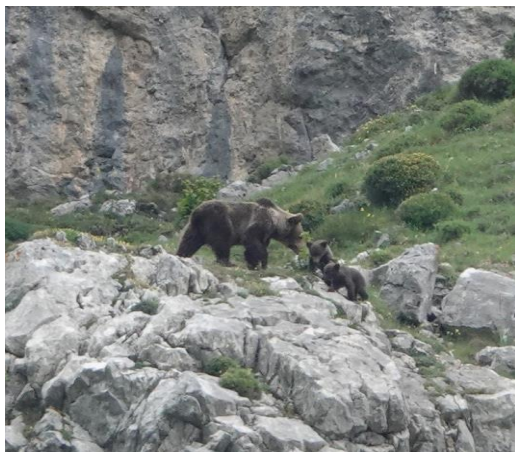
Peter and Sue Haslem (Recorders)

SPAIN 19th May – 5th June 2023

Mid-May saw us on the high seas travelling from Portsmouth to Santander for a wildlife holiday in Northern Spain in the Cantabrian mountains, which is one of the most sparsely populated areas in Europe – but ideal for wildlife.



We had planned a three-centre holiday, to see wolves, wild cats and brown bears, starting in Arbejal in the east, followed by Lugueros in the centre and finishing in Villablino in the west. Our guide was a local naturalist, Manu. In the event, wild cats completely eluded us, and we only heard the wolves, but we were treated to multiple sightings of bears at each location – a total of 11 being seen, including a mother with 2 frisky cubs climbing a tree. We were told that we were very lucky to see so many bears, especially during the day, as they're normally quite reclusive, confining their foraging to early morning and late evening.



When we were last in Spain in 2022 we saw the effects of wild fires and drought, with vast tracts of land devastated. However, the Cantabrian mountains seemed to have suffered less than the Central Plains. On our daily trips out with Manu in his Jimny, we saw many birds, some common to the UK, but there were several highlights, including Great and Little Bustard.



Another highlight was the Bluethroat, seen in a location well off the beaten track.



Bee-eaters are now seen over here – but always a pleasure and we were pleased to see them.

And we enjoyed seeing Egyptian Vultures a couple of times.



Our Bird list In order of appearance:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Ringed Plover | Corn Bunting | Mountain Hare (oops – not a bird) | Nesting White Storks |
| White Wagtail | Grey Wagtail | Common Sandpiper | Red Deer |
| House sparrows in 9 bird boxes | | Black Vulture | Yellow Hammer |
| Crested Lark | Wheatear | Egyptian Vulture | Hen Harrier |
| Little Bustard | Great Bustard | Skylark | Bee-eaters |
| Quail | Linnet | Kestrel (and Kestrel boxes) | Red-legged Partridge |
| Hoopoe | Swifts | Great Grey Shrike | Great Crested Grebe |
| Marsh Harrier | Black Kite | Whinchat | Black Redstart |

Then with our Spanish friends, Vega and Alfonso, further south west near to Portugal, we saw a few extras:

- Short-toed Eagle
- Blue Rock Thrush
- Iberian Painted Frog
- Grass Snake swimming
- Swift nest boxes on the huge wall of a dam with House Martins flying about.
- Reed Warbler
- Black-tailed Godwits
- Black-winged Stilts
- Cattle Egrets
- Spoonbills

We're not strict bird watchers, we just enjoy seeing what we can. So our lists are never too long.

Betty and Bob Lee

Pensychnant- March 14th 2024

Pensychnant Conservation Centre lies on the southern flank of Conwy Mountain and comprises 120 acres of woodland and heath. The house itself is 17th century with a real mish mash of architectural styles and follies.

We commenced in the woodland area moving slowly uphill where we saw nuthatch, jay, robin great and blue tit, jackdaw, dunnock, chaffinch, siskin and coal tit. Emerging from the woodland a tawny owl could be heard and high above a circling buzzard. We then emerged onto a knoll which gave us a truly spectacular view to the west looking down the glacial scar which is the Sychnant Pass. Here we were rewarded with the spectacular displays of aerobatics by both chough and raven and flyby by a single sparrowhawk. A short walk back through part of the woodland then out onto the heath. Two small lakes were encountered on the open heathland, the first with two grey herons and the second with a pair of stonechats (M+F) and a meadow pipit.

Walking back through the woodland to the Centre we observed treecreeper, goldcrest, Gt spotted woodpecker and a song thrush.



A short drive took us to the Spinnies where we found one of the roadside hides inaccessible due to flooding and the other with just a solitary little egret. The nearby fields however had good sized flocks of oystercatcher, curlew and redshank plus a few shelduck. Lunch was taken at the western hide as the weather closed in.



From the pleasant but a little windy morning, the weather was taking a turn for the worst and squalls of rain swept through on occasions. On the seaward side of the hide there were distant views of sizeable rafts of goldeneye, four gull species including greater black backed. Nestling alongside the far bank of the river Ogwen outfall were both little and great crested grebe.

On the lagoon side of the hide there was a lack of smaller birds as the feeders were all empty, however we still had a good number of species including: moorhen, siskin, goldfinch, dunnock, robin, goldfinch, great tit and blackbird.

En route back to the cars a dozen or so greylag geese had arrived in the fields by the car park.

Many thanks to all the members who showed up on the day. In retrospect any future visits we plan to the centre, the month of May would be a better proposition with there being possible sightings of

Pied flycatcher and redstart, plus the fact that the wildflower meadows would be coming into bloom.

Alan Smethurst

Field Events 2024

April Sat 27th, **RSPB LAKE VYRNWY**. Meet 10.15. Rocky streams, woodland, meadows and moorland, bring RSPB membership cards. Meet at Tinkersdale car park, Hawarden, for carshare 8.30am. Contact Bill Dickinson on 07968438121 for more details.

May Sat 11th, **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. Meet at the Tudor Rose for carshare at 8.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

June Thurs 20th, **LLANDEGLA FOREST**, meet at 8pm for 8.30pm start, in the car park at OnePlanet Adventure, Llandegla visitor centre, Grid reference SJ219519. Postcode LL113AA. It;s a fairly demanding walk which takes around 40 minutes. Contact Barry Lynes 07923128124 for more details.

July Sat 6th **POINT OF AYR AND GRONANT** The last remaining breeding site for Little Terns in Wales is on the shingle spits of Gronant. Meet in the carpark, Station Rd, Talacre, 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

August 17th, **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.

September Sat 21st, **HILBRE ISLAND** over high tide, waders, terns and skuas. Meet at West Kirby Sailing Centre, Dee Lane (SJ213869) at 9.00 am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

October Sun 20th, **WEPRE PARK**, Connah's Quay. Meet at 10.30am near the Visitor Centre, join Karen and Adrian for a FUNGI FORAY. We will hope to find a variety of different fungi and together try to identify as many as we can and learn a bit more about them. Contact Karen Garnett 07910 331502 for more details.

November Sat 16th, **RSPB OLD MOOR** Dearne Valley. A wildlife oasis in the heart of Yorkshire's industrial landscape. Bring RSPB membership cards. Meet at 10.00am at the reserve reception centre. Meet at the Tudor Rose for carshare at 8.00am Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

December Sun 15th, **BEDDMANARCH BAY AND INLAND SEA**. Beddmanarch Bay is a SSSI, the site comprises the area of coastal saltmarshes, mudflats and shallow coastal water. The Inland Sea is adjacent to the bay but isolated by the A55. Meet Penrhos Coastal Park at 10.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Bill Dickinson

Nest Boxes 2023

The status of the Nest boxes on the reserve and surrounding farmland in 2023 was as follows:

	BOXES	USED	PERCENTAGE
Deenats Reserve	37	30	81%
Park farm	6	5	83%
Papermill pool	6	4	66%
Cheshire farm	16	15	94%
Oakenholt farm	13	7	41%
Top – y – fron	13	13	100%
Kelsterton farm	5	4	80%
Ysgol Owen Jones	5	3	60%
	101	81	80%

Due to other commitments only the boxes at Ysgol Owen Jones were checked for chicks/eggs last year. The 3 used boxes produced 20 blue tit chicks (all fledged)

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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Email address: webeditor@deenats.org.uk

Facebook: MEMBERS OF DEESIDE NATURALIST SOCIETY