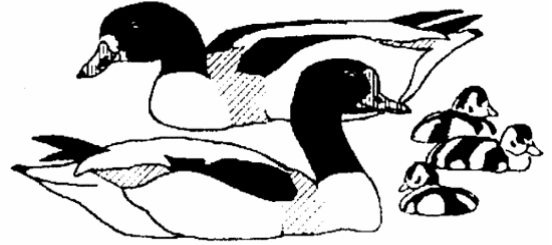


Deeside Naturalists' Society



Newsletter 126

Registered Charity No. 510146

August 2011

Once again thanks to everyone who has contributed articles to this edition. There has in fact, been plenty to fill the pages. One thing I did promise in the last issue of the newsletter was to include a regular feature dealing with basic topics or information. I intend to call this the 'Learning Curve' and the article, in this edition written by Andrew, is the first in this series. Also in this newsletter are two articles about the trip to Eyarth Rocks. I've included both as they cover it from different perspectives - that of butterflies and plants. It is interesting to see how the two come together.

On 16th September the indoor talks resume with Jan Miller's Wildlife Gardening. This promises to be an excellent evening and it was Jan who ran the Butterfly workshop in April. She has also written a book on Gardening for Butterflies and Bees which will be on sale on the night. The other indoor meetings are:

21st October	Gordon Yates - Snowy Owl, King of the Arctic
18th November	Ann Brenchley - Birds of Costa Rica
9th December	DNS Annual General Meeting

Field Meetings

Saturday 24th September	RSPB's New Dee Estuary Reserve - Guided Tour
Sunday 30th October	Open Day on the Reserve
Saturday 12th November	Point of Ayr - Wintering waders, waterfowl & raptors

Any Changes to the programme issued at the beginning of the year will be posted on our website.

www.deesidenaturalists.org.uk

Please do continue to send in your articles. They should be e-mailed to me at: **dns@vbahelp.net**
Please include your name within the e-mail. The next edition of the Newsletter will be in December.

Chairman's Report

Birding wise, the summer months are relatively quiet on the Reserve, this gives us the chance to get on with any outstanding maintenance work especially in the month of August when breeding has come to an end.

This year we are having the Field Studies Centre redecorated, the place is looking a little tired and needs refreshing. We have appointed Grove Decorating Services, a company based in Mold to carry out the work which will be finished before the Open Day on Sunday 30th October.

Janice has written an article on the Society's weekend away in Scotland and reading it you will gather we had a great time. Something she hasn't mentioned is a scheme they run for Bird Clubs, I was asked to register our Society by simply filling in a form (no cost to us) and by doing so the hotel will donate £10 for every guest who stayed on the weekend, this means we will be getting a cheque for £290 early next year. They also told me that any Deeside Naturalists Society member staying at the hotel in the future will entitle us to receive £10 provided you make it clear when booking where you are from.

David Jones

Reserve Notes

Trees and Shrubs in the woodland between the wetland meadow and the railway.

Willow

Hawthorn

Blackthorn

Snowberry

Wild Cherry

Bramble

Wild Rose

Alder

Rowan

Mountain Ash

Birch

Crab Apple

Guelder Rose

Hazel

Dogwood

Please advise the writer of any additional records, for the woodland, by placing the name of the additional record in an envelope in the signing in box

Members who walk along the Wetland Meadow path, which leads off from the gateway by the west hide, will recently have been rewarded with sightings of Redstart, a first for the Reserve. Follow the path to its end and turn right and you meet the recently planted woodland which appears to be developing well with an interplay of birds from the woodland to the farm buildings across the railway line. Not too many nests at the moment but they will surely come.

The Reserve generally has much to offer the birdwatcher at the moment. The Ash pool contains quite large numbers of Mallard together with Teal, Coot, Moorhen, Tufted duck, Wigeon, Little Grebe, Gadwall and Canada Geese. Around the edge of the island (overgrown at the moment) were c40 Black-tailed Godwits. A couple of hundred plus Godwits were also feeding on the river edge.

While observing the Ash pool there was a continuous movement of Swallows flying north. As you view the river edge at low water you will note the continuing loss of saltmarsh and mudflat to the river. The keen observer will also note the attempted recolonising of the saltmarsh above some of the creek edges. The Bunded pool has a reasonable depth of water at the time of writing and lists three to four-hundred Redshank with a dozen Little Egret, a few Curlew, some Oystercatcher and a Greenshank.

Which brings us to the Nature Trail. Many readers of newspapers will be aware of the recent publicity given to the Oxford Ragwort, a yellow flowered notifiable weed seen countrywide. It is carcinogenic- a substance producing cancer from plant and pollen. The seed is blown widely on the wind like dandelion. The Nature trail looks as though Ragwort has been planted as a crop! The short term answer is to spray the whole Ragwort area with glyphosphate, leave for two or three weeks and then on a dry day rake it over producing a fine tilth. Simultaneously gathering the weed into piles to burn. From such scary beginnings it could be possible to produce a fine, safe flower meadow which would be attractive to butterflies, moths, bees, birds and members.

Finally. The Peregrines attempted to breed high up in the E-ON chimney eyrie again this year but I am advised that human disturbance on the chimney prevented a successful outcome.

Ray Roberts

Maintenance/Work Day

Sunday 23rd October

Meet at Field Studies Centre 09.30

For further details contact David Jones on 01244537440.

Society News

PENNINGTON FLASH
Saturday 9th April 2011

Pennington flash is an amazing public facility for the people of Wigan. It has a nine-hole golf course, open areas with miles of footpaths bounded by the Leeds to Liverpool canal. A large expanse of water used for boating, woodland and many small lakes surrounded by trees. By mid afternoon the place was packed with many families with children.

In the midst of all this activity there is ample room to cater for bird watching in total peace, several hides affording excellent views of varying habitat and offering us a list of over 50 species on the day. Highlights were good views of Little Ringed Plover, Green and Common Sandpipers and Goosander. The Bunting hide with its many feeders was the favourite of the photographers. It gave close views of spectacular Bullfinches probably six pair, handsome Reed Buntings, Blackcaps, Greenfinch, Robin, and the rare opportunity to see the subtle plumage of the Stock Dove at close quarters.

The advantage of being in the company of other birdwatchers is nothing is missed and identification is a challenge shared. It was a privilege and pleasure to lead a happy likeminded group on a perfect spring day in such a superb location. Thank you to the thirteen members who came and made it such an enjoyable day.

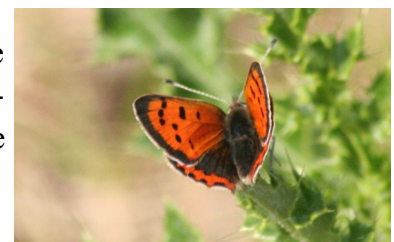
Bill Griffiths.

BUTTERFLY WORKSHOP - DNS Reserve
30 April by Jan Miller organised by Christine Hamer

The day was broken into three parts with the first being a presentation by Jan Miller which took about an hour outlining the plight of the butterfly, an introduction to Eyarth Rocks and details of the thirty-five species that can be seen in North Wales and Northern England. She also mentioned two others - the Small Blue which has not been seen in North Wales for many years and the Silver-studded Blue (Great Orme Race) which, as the name implies, can only be found on the Great Orme. Jan also covered useful information about when they can be seen and the type of plants you can grow which will encourage them into your garden. We were then broken up into teams and carried out an identification exercise where we matched pictures to names. For those who knew nothing about butterflies it was a surprise to learn that there is no species called Cabbage White - a name which is used, incorrectly, for three types; the Large White, the Small White and the Green-veined White.

After lunch we walked around the reserve where Jan pointed out the most likely places we would find butterflies and, with her help, we managed to see and identify the following species on the nature trail; Large White, Green-veined white, Dingy Skipper, Red Admiral and on the wetland meadow path; Orange Tip, Speckled Wood, Small Copper (pictured), Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell. According to Jan there were only two other species - the Holly Blue and the Comma - that we could have seen at that time of the year so we did very well.

Eighteen people attended the workshop which was excellent, everyone enjoyed it and there were not too many hangovers after the Royal Wedding. The weather also stayed dry - if a bit windy. Thanks to Christine for organising it.



Bob Must

Society News

EYARTH ROCKS - Part One
Sunday 22nd May

This is a Butterfly Conservation Nature Reserve near Ruthin and forms part of the Craig-Adwy-wynt SSSI protected for the nationally scarce limestone pavement. It is one of the most important sites in Wales for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary and this was our target butterfly. Heavy rain greeted us when we parked near Eyarth Bridge, not ideal butterfly weather. Nine of us set off through Eyarth Hall Woods, four dressed in full foul-weather gear, others waterproof jackets and ever the optimist I was wearing shorts.

The walk along the old railway line and up through the woods was interesting with plenty of bird song to help us on our way up to the reserve although no sign of dippers on the river. When we arrived at the reserve it had stopped raining and the sun was out. As we were all negotiating the stile Norman saw a butterfly on a small rock in the bracken by the gate and asked if that was the butterfly we were looking for and it was a Pearl-bordered Fritillary (pictured), I thought the 'gods' were being kind to me. As it was still cold with the wind even though the sun was out, the butterfly stayed on the stone absorbing warmth 'under-body heating' and the warmth of the sun encouraged it to stay there for about 3-4 minutes giving everyone a chance to see it and take photos. We walked through the reserve and into the next field and back to the reserve, good views but no more butterflies but lots of Greater Butterfly Orchids and a few Early Purples going over on the way back through the reserve.



Five left us at lunch time leaving Norman, Bob, Mathilde and myself to find a sheltered spot out of the cold wind on the limestone pavement for a lunch stop with accompanying bird song, rain and sunshine often at the same time. After lunch although the wind was still very cold, the sun did make an appearance so we walked around the reserve and SSSI once more, finding a total of nine Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, around ten to fifteen Small Heath, three unidentified whites and a Green-veined White. Norman was happy as there was bird song around us the whole time, Mathilde was on her knees looking at limestone plants and Bob was taking photos.

On the way back through the wood we found the plant Herb Paris which I couldn't find on the way up although a few of the group did see it. It grows in limestone woods and although reasonably common in Denbighshire and Flintshire it is rare in the rest of the UK. When we arrived back to the start of the old railway line near the houses where the River Clwyd flows and is shielded from the path by a lot of vegetation, we saw in the distance damselflies which I identified as Beautiful Demoiselles (pictured), a male, female and a third not sexed. Allan Brandon (dragonfly recorder for North Wales) confirmed this is a known site and that the demoiselles can be found on rivers in the area. In all an excellent day which everyone who stayed on after lunch enjoyed.



Linda M Jones

In addition Norman, our bird expert managed a tally of thirty-seven birds including Swift, Swallow, House Martin, Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler.

Editor

Society News

EYARTH ROCKS - Part Two

The following are a small selection of the plants we admired while trying to spot butterflies:

The food plant of the Pearl-bordered fritillary's caterpillar.

Common dog-violet. This benefits from the bracken management regime in the reserve of raking away the dead bracken in the autumn so the violet can easily reach the light and grow in the early spring, before the bracken shades them.

Plants of rich, especially calcareous soils (as present on Eyarth rocks which are limestone):

Herb Paris (pictured). This belongs to the lily family but looks very unlike lilies with its whorl of usually four broad leaves and the simple greenish flower in the middle which yields a shiny black berry.



Greater butterfly orchid. A spectacular plant which grows up to 50cm with a dense spike of green-tinged creamy-white flowers.

Early-purple orchid. Of similar size to the *Greater butterfly orchid* and with an equally showy spike of crimson-purple flowers, the leaves usually dark-spotted.

Hound's-tongue, similar in size and bears greyish-downy leaves along the stem, small purplish-red flowers. The plant is said to smell of mice.

In the woods, there were many plants of the "ancient woodland". This indicates that the slopes of Eyarth hill have remained wooded and undisturbed for at least three to four hundred years):

Lords and Ladies (Cuckoo pint). With its shiny, arrow-shaped leaves, this is a strange-shaped tubular flower that will form conspicuous dense spikes of orange-red berries later on.

Wood anemone. There were whole carpets of them but had flowered earlier in spring.

Dog's mercury. Also carpeting wide areas with its dark-green, oval-pointed leaves.

Woodruff. This plant has tiny white star-like flowers on the stems bearing whorls of 6-8 leaves.

Pignut. Carrying umbels of delicate white flowers. Pigs, when left to feed in woods in the past, would root out the swollen tuber.

Bluebell' The native species, carpets of them but not in full bloom any more.

In the 'rabbit-cropped' turf only diminutive, low-growing specimens are able to survive and flower:

Black medick. Belonging to the pea family, this has tiny heads of yellow flowers.

Small-flowered crane's-bill. Bears small purple-mauve flowers.

Mathilde Baker-Schommer

Society News

GRANTOWN - ON - SPEY WEEKEND

6th - 8th May

When discussing where to go for this year's weekend away Bob and Betty Lee recommended trying The Grant Arms Hotel at Grantown-on-Spey. The hotel's famous visitors include both Queen Victoria and the present Queen, its location is just south of Inverness, three hours drive from Edinburgh. Twenty-nine members of the Deeside Naturalist Society travelled up to Scotland in search of wildlife (not a wild life). The weather forecast was dismal but the weather turned out to be quite good.

The Bird Watching & Wildlife Club briefings given by staff each evening included sightings reported in the area that day, these were then added to the records. A Birdwatching Wildlife Map was supplied by the hotel to each bedroom. The 'Where to go what to see guide' and 'The Daily Chirp', a news release paper left on the breakfast table each morning included: - 'What's on', 'Pick of the day' and 'Suggested days out'. These items were very helpful when deciding which locations to choose.

On Saturday morning the 7th May, two guided walks organised by the hotel staff proved very popular with our party. In the local **Anagach Woods** Willow Warbler and Red Squirrel were seen, on the **Speyside Way** by the river, five Common Sandpiper, four Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Red breasted Merganser, Goldeneye, Common Tern, Sand Martin, Goosander, Crossbill (two adult and two junior).

The **Avielochan Hide** for use by hotel guests only, provided us with good views of Slavonian Grebe, Common Sandpiper, two Ospreys, Goldeneye, Little Grebe, Spotted Flycatcher, Oystercatcher, Teal, Sand and House Martins.

The following data is taken from the sheets kindly provided by the Bird Club:

Burghead. White Billed Diver, Harbour Porpoise, Red Throated Diver, Long Tailed Duck, seven Common Scoter.

Osprey Centre. Two Capercaillie, Crested Tit, Common Lizard, two Osprey, Red Squirrel and Greater Spotted Woodpecker.

Craigellochie. Reserve Peregrine, Willow Warbler, Tawny Owl.

Insh Marshes. Roe Deer, Curlew, a Cuckoo was heard, Marsh Harrier, Reed Bunting, Peregrine.

Lochindorb. Black Throated Diver, Whinchat, two Cuckoo, Meadow Pipit, Black and Red Grouse, Red-breasted Merganser.

Findhorn Valley. Red Deer, Peregrine, Ring Ouzel, Redstart, Golden Eagle, Mountain Hares, Goshawk, Crossbills, Sparrowhawk, Tree Pipit.

Cairngorm Ptarmigan Restaurant. Two Dotterel.

Obviously not every bird is included in this list, space and boredom prevailing.

Next year's weekend away will be a hard act to follow. Thank you to David for organising the event this year.

Janice Jones



Through The Editors Binoculars

One of the things I've been looking at since the last newsletter are the different sources of wildlife information available to the novice. I am sure it will come as no surprise to anyone that the variety and scope ranges from one extreme to the other. The biggest problem was trying to find books that dealt with things in the local area or just Britain as a whole. With the exception of the RSPB most publications seem to include Europe as well which significantly increases the size, complexity and the price (let's not forget the price which can be considerable). However, at £4.99 the RSPB Pocket Guide to British Birds is excellent value - although you do need a large pocket for it!

I also found that the Field Studies Council produce fold-out laminated charts that cover the more common plants, birds, insects and flowers that can be found in Britain. The Butterfly Conservation North Wales Branch have a similar document that deals specifically with North Wales and Northern England. All these retail for less than £5.00. Further information can be found on their websites:

<http://www.field-studies-council.org/publications/index.aspx>
<http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/>

There is also a free website called iSpot which is part of the Open University and funded by the National Lottery. If you have a photograph of something you cannot recognise you can post it to this website and they will come back with an answer. You have to create an account with them which is free and they also require details of where the photo was taken. Start at: <http://www.ispot.org.uk/>

At the other end of the scale an 1830 copy of Audubon's Birds of America was sold at Sotheby's London last December for 6.5 million pounds making it the world's most expensive book. Apparently there are another 118 in existence so it might be worth a trip to a few car-boot sales.

Finally, for those who have a Smart Phone there is an app called BirdsUK which contains a list of fifty UK birds and includes a written guide, a photo and examples of their call or song. All this for just £0.59p (at the time of writing). I bet Audubon's doesn't have all of that!

Quiz

NATIONAL TRAILS

Only a small quiz this issue due to the number of articles. The following are all National trails, their length and the area of the UK they are in. All you have to do is match the Path with the correct distance and area. Answers are at the bottom of page eight.

	Path	Distance	Area
1	a. Cleveland Way	a. 177	a. Northern England
2.	b. Cotswold Way	b. 268	b. Southern England
3	c. Glyndwr's Way	c. 630	c. South West Wales
4	d. Hadrian's Wall	d. 110	d. Central England
5	e. Offa's Dyke Path	e. 84	e. Mid Wales
6	f. Pembrokeshire Coast Path	f. 87	f. Peak District to Scottish Borders
7	g. Pennine Way	g. 102	g. South West England
8	h. The Ridgeway	h. 184	h. England/Wales Border
9	i. South West Coast Path	i. 186	i. South West England
10	j. Thames Path	j. 135	j. North Yorkshire

Learning Curve

RECORDING INFORMATION

Some of you may remember the article in this newsletter a few years ago regarding the recording of Flora and Fauna on the reserve, so please excuse me for repeating the main content of that message which is still the same. The number of records of Flora and Fauna is going up year after year, which is excellent and in order to maintain an accurate picture of our reserve we need to record any and all species of plant and animal we encounter.

As many of you will know, there are recording books in each of the hides and whiteboards are on the walls for highlighting some of the more interesting species seen. These are not just for the birds seen, we would like you to record any species of plant or animal encountered on the reserve with as much detail as possible, such as where the species was seen, date, abundance, and wherever possible age and sex of the species. We have also added maps of the reserve with codes for the appropriate habitat you are looking at and produced new recording books to help us identify exactly where the birds/animals are at any time. This year society members have started recording the Butterflies on the reserve in more detail, with specific recording areas established and timed visits to the reserve to make sure there is sufficient coverage.

The maps and recording booklets have been produced by E.ON in consultation with myself and other members of the committee to help us obtain more meaningful information. One such example of this is the length of the grass on the Bunded pools. It caused a fair amount of discussion among society members when the grass was cut late in the summer and some believed it was to the detriment of the wading birds using the area for roosting during high tide. This is indeed one argument, the birds appeared to be using the long grass for shelter whilst they were roosting. However, leaving the grass uncut for long periods results in the vegetation becoming rank and having the opposite effect to 'fresh' long grass, where the birds wouldn't use the area at all. By introducing the new recording sheets and maps we can identify which areas the birds are using at particular times of the year, so, if the birds are using the Salt Marsh area when the grass is long, but not once the grass has been cut, we will be able to identify this behaviour and produce a cutting regime for these areas that will benefit both the wildlife and the long term objectives of the Reserve.

As well as providing E.ON and DNS members with information about the reserve, the bird records are also sent to the County Recorder. In order for us to be able to forward any sightings on we also ask for the name of the person who has made the observation (not just your initials). This may also help if we need to follow up any sightings of rare species.

If you have any questions about any of the above, or simply about the recording that goes on at the reserve please e-mail me at recorder@deesidenaturalists.org.uk

Andrew Wallbank

Answers To Quiz

Last month I included a picture quiz and asked for the answers to be e-mailed in. I received no replies so I've decided to drop that from future newsletters. The butterfly was a Speckled Wood, the insect a Green Shield bug and the bird - I haven't a clue - I was hoping someone could tell me. I'll have to put it on ispot!

Answers
1. a, d, j; 2. b, g, i; 3. c, j, e; 4. d, e, a; 5. e, a, h; 6. f, i, c; 7. g, b, f; 8. h, f, d; 9. i, c, g; 10. j, h, b;