

# Newsletter



Issue 147

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Registered Charity No. 510146

Welcome to the Summer edition of the Newsletter.

The wildlife has had a rather topsy turvy weather conditions to contend with over the past three or four months. Let's hope things settle down to something nearer normality for them in the months to come.

A reminder to members that the Reserve is closed from 17.00hrs Monday to 06.00hrs Tuesday every week. There is strictly no admittance to the site between these hours. This is an agreement with Uniper in order for them to carry out maintenance work.

Reserve maintenance day this year will be on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October when we have a general tidy up of the Reserve in readiness for the Open Day on the 27<sup>th</sup> October ( see back page), volunteers would be most welcome. There is never any major work involved – basically making sure the hides are clean and tidy with clean windows and ensuring the site has no litter about. We will be meeting at the Field Centre at 10.00am, have a tea/coffee and then set to.

If any member has any old bird feeders that they no longer use, you might consider donating them to the Society. All will be gladly received and may be left in the Dee hide, thank you.

Over the past few weeks we have had a contractor on site doing essential work on the reserve. This includes reflooring of the middle hide and repainting the floors in the Dee and East hides. Wooden posts have been replaced with concrete ones on the screening at the West hide as they have always been at the mercy of the prevailing winds blowing up the river.

There are a small number of lost property items that have been left in the various hides:

1 x 95mm Tamron lens cap

1 x 77mm generic lens cap

1 x Specsavers glasses case.

Anyone missing any of these items give me a call on 07896758222.

*Alan Smethurst*

# World's End 1<sup>st</sup> April

World's End lies on a single track road from the small village of [Minera](#) near Wrexham, which crosses [Esclusham Mountain](#) and the [Ruabon Moors](#) to the top of the Eglwyseg valley. Worlds End, a spectacular and dominating outcrop of Carboniferous Limestone from Worlds End and Eglwyseg to Trevor gives the North side of the Dee Valley an easily identifiable character with the 'Seven Sisters', great curves of outcropping limestone providing walkers, ramblers and birders with panoramic views all along its length.

From the end of March until early June, male Black Grouse gather at dawn on the edges of the forest to strut their stuff, flash their white tail feathers and impress the watching females, hiding nearby, unfortunately also hiding from us.

Shortly after leaving the cars we were fortunate enough to be viewing, from the road across a small gorge, two groups that each comprised of 12 and 14 males (blackcocks).

The noises were, a smooth bubbling call, and a loud throaty, scratchy, hissing call that seemed to be the threatening tone. All this was being acted out on the only flat and open area around.

The males seemed to posture, pose, and threaten each other with bright red inflated wattles and rasping noises but without striking each other. A wonderful spectacle to watch as each bird either stood as an onlooker or stepped up to show his prowess towards another bird, tail feathers held high and head kept close to the ground like a raging bull ready to attack a red rag.

There were numerous Meadow Pipits, the occasional Wood Pigeon, a Sparrowhawk and in the distance a Peregrine Falcon.

After watching this spectacle for a considerable time we made our way across the open moorland towards the cliffs at World's End and heard Red Grouse, saw Stonechat, more Meadow Pipits, Buzzards, Kestrel, a pair of Greylag geese were circling around the moors and as for the last occasion that we were up here a pair of Canada geese on the moors.

Back at the car park before departing a number of woodland and open country birds were seen and heard: Chaffinch, Song Thrush, Wren, together with Herring gull, Jackdaw and Pheasant.

I would like to thank the few who made the effort of getting up at 5.30am but we were justly rewarded, in all as a group we probably saw circa 40 black grouse in total, which has to be one of the year's birding highlights, together with another 20 species.

Foot Note: Beast from the East (it seems along time ago), but on opening the curtains the following day, Easter Monday, there was heavy snow on the ground, how fortunate were we!

*Bill Dickinson*

# Consall nature Park – 28<sup>th</sup> April



Consall Nature Park is not the easiest of sites to find, the post code will take the visitor as far as Consall village but there is still a good three miles along what appear to be, and is signposted as, a dead end country lane. The car park for the reserve is along a turning off this lane just past Consall Hall.

I was dismayed, along with the other group members, to find that the facilities for the reserve are no longer available. The visitors' centre, shop, café and toilets are, so the sign said "Closed until further notice".

The morning was overcast but not cold.

At just after 10:00 our group of eight, seven DNS members and one local gent who had seen an advert for a walk around the park and decided to tag along, set off from the car park down the lane towards the River Churnet.

Turning left before we reached the road bridge, we headed northwards to follow the river and soon came to a footbridge leading over the river to the Black Lion Inn on the far bank. At this point is the conflagration of the River Churnet and the Caldon Canal. At the entrance gate to the inn we followed the footpath that passes beneath the Churnet Valley Railway line and walked southwards along the canal towpath. All the time we were looking and listening for birdlife but very little was about, a Heron passed overhead, two Buzzards circled high across the fields, a female Blackcap flew silently from a holly bush and a male Blackbird sat preening at the top of a birch tree. Usually along this route Dippers and Grey Wagtails can be seen, but not today. At the road bridge we re-crossed the river and clambered over a stile that led into an open meadow. The grassy path soon became a boarded walkway and entered a wooded area. The ground either side of us was lush with butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*) that were just beginning to flower, and golden yellow marsh marigolds (*Caltha palustris*). Growing from the rotting side of a hawthorn bush we noticed a strange looking fungus, later identified as false puffball (*Enteridium lycoperdon*) and a bracket fungus (*Polypores*) growing like a series of steps spiralling around a birch tree. From here the ground rose steeply up a series of man made steps to a vantage point, with spectacular views across the treetops, beside Far Kingsly Banks. Here we stopped for lunch. Still the birdlife stayed away, although we could hear Long Tailed Tit, Nuthatch, Wren and Chiff-chaff. As we descended the muddy and slippery path we stopped at a clearing to watch three Sparrowhawks circling overhead when suddenly a larger hawk flew by. From the size, shape and markings we were fairly certain it was a Goshawk but it did not stay around long enough for positive identification.

It was only a short walk from here back along decent pathways beside the lake to the carpark.

A total of between thirty and forty birds had been seen, or heard, during our three hour walk so the day had not been too bad, and the forecasted rain did not show.

Consall Nature Park is one of my favourite places for walking and I do hope that the facilities reopen before too long.

Thank you to the other members of the group for making the visit enjoyable.

*Ron Plummer*

# RSPB Blacktoft Sands 5<sup>th</sup> May

Fantastic visit to this reserve on the Humber estuary, Blacktoft Sands RSPB reserve is in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The reserve is on the southern bank of the Ouse, opposite the village of Blacktoft, and is a wetland. Being at the beginning of the Humber Estuary, the water is slightly saline. The reserve's tidal reed bed is the largest in England. It is known for its wetland breeding birds, including marsh harrier, bittern and bearded tit.

It was great to be birdwatching in warm, sunny conditions at last, such a shame that only four members could make the trip



Dotterel. Photo –TT Taylor

As mentioned, on the DeeNats website, prior to the trip there is always a chance of seeing dotterel in the local area, so it was no surprise that we all ended up together looking for these stunning birds. Trevor Taylor (thanks for the write up on Facebook) arrived first, with no other cars there, and located the birds (not easy in a recently ploughed field) and began watching, within five minutes cars had descended from all around and many people enjoyed good views of \*twelve dotterel which remained throughout the day, as they were still in the same location as we drove past in the evening. Also seen at this location, we had Corn Bunting, Yellowhammer and Wheatear.....not a bad start to the day.

We then moved onto the reserve itself and had our morning coffee in the picnic area surrounded by Tree Sparrows, moving onto the reserve, which consists of seven hides looking over extensive reed beds and pools, during the course of the day we enjoyed great views of Sedge and Grasshopper warblers, brief (as always) views of Cetti's warbler in the reeds around the pools. Bearded tits popped up and down over the reeds, playing a game of now you see me now you don't.

On the pools we had Avocet, two Spotted Redshank in full summer plumage, Black Tailed Godwit, a good selection of ducks and a lone Pinkfoot in amongst the Greylag geese.

Over the reed beds we had a good selection of raptors with Sparrowhawk, Kestrel and distant Buzzards, the best views were of several Marsh Harriers with both male and female making close passes in front of the hides.....But the absolute star of the day, the icing on the cake was a female Montagu's harrier which we saw several times during the day, this bird has been back to this reserve for the last five years, unfortunately she lost her mate a couple of years ago, but fingers crossed a male will find her this year. What appears amazing was that according to reports on Twitter this bird is currently the only Montagu's harrier reported as having arrived back in the UK this year (the Bird Guide book says we only get 5 - 10 pairs a year) so a real privilege to have seen her.



Marsh harrier. Photo\_ TT Taylor

In total we managed 60 species on the day. I would like to say a big thank you to those that made the effort.

\* The collective noun for a group of Dotterels is a "trip" (thank you Barry Curnow) so we had a "Trip of Twelve", three times the number of Members!

Bill Dickinson

# Reserve Report Apr-Jul



*Common Sandpiper*

From frozen pools in March to droughts in July, the reserve has experienced extremes of nature through Spring to Summer. During the harsh cold early spring we had lots of birds benefiting from our regularly filled feeders, With the new varieties of feeds made available we were attracting Lesser Redpoll , Siskin and Brambling as well as our regular Greenfinch, Goldfinch and Tits.

Twite were a regular feature during this time seen often around the car park of the West hide. Our last sighting was on April 20<sup>th</sup>.

Many of our winter visitors stuck around, with Redwings and Fieldfares being noted right up until April 13<sup>th</sup>.

An exceptional record of 7 Stonechat, on 9<sup>th</sup> March, was unprecedented with annual sightings of one or two birds being more usual.

Two hundred Golden Plover was the largest count on Oakenholt Marsh following a week of good numbers during April.

We waited expectantly for our returning Little Ringed Plovers and were rewarded with a first sighting on April 5<sup>th</sup> (Keith Lloyd-Jones). We appear to have two pairs nesting on site and they can often be seen feeding on the Ash pool.

A female Pied Flycatcher was seen by only a few members on 19<sup>th</sup> April, once a breeding regular, now a rare sighting on the Reserve.

Yellow wagtails are a rare occurrence and it was pleasing to see three adult birds, including a stunning male on 18<sup>th</sup> April.

Waders continued to delight throughout May, as migration was delayed, with 27 summer plumaged Sanderlings and 13 Grey Plover (various plumages) dropping onto Flint sands on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> May respectively.

An Egyptian goose and four 'out of season' Pink footed geese were on our June listings with the 'Gypo' staying for four days.

Three Great egrets are daily visitors to the Middle bunded pool since the 25<sup>th</sup> June.

As we write this report we are starting to see good numbers of returning waders , many still in splendid breeding plumage, with Red Black Tailed Godwits and Black Spotted Redshanks together with hundreds of Common Redshanks and some Greenshanks.

Breeding successes on the Ash pool include Coots, Moorhens, Tufted ducks , Swans and Reed Warblers.

A family of 8 young Stoats has been delighting observers and photographers from the West hide. You can appreciate some of these images on our Facebook site.

*Peter Haslem*

# Nightjars –Llandegla 8<sup>th</sup> June



Photo: *Phil Hotchkiss*

A good turnout of members and helpers met at One Planet Adventure Visitor Centre at 8 pm on a fine but cool summer evening. While we waited at the visitors centre two adult female Crossbills and a juvenile Crossbill appeared on the tops of the pines.

We left the centre and we walked slowly up the forest track, watching and listening as we went. Almost immediately we saw two Willow Warblers in the low bushes and heard a Blackcap singing nearby. We left the forest track and walked around the reservoir.

On the water were a pair on Great Crested Grebe and a number of Canada Geese with young. Those at the front of the group had good views of a male Bullfinch and later a female and male Siskin. Although fairly common birds, Bullfinch, Siskin and Grebe would grace any exotic bird book.

We walked onto the RSPB hide to take a look at a different habitat. Near the hide a Grasshopper Warbler was heard and at the hide we had distant views of male Black Grouse.

We then walked on to the clear fell area where we waited for dusk to fall and hoped to see Nightjars. We stood in a line watching the clear fell area and waited. Fortunately there was enough of a breeze to keep the midges at bay. The sunset was beautiful and worthy of a photo or two. There was no sign of ‘churring’ but suddenly a male Nightjar flew low and close into the undergrowth. The distinctive sound then began and we were then treated to a Nightjar flying display with one and sometimes two birds flying low over the clear fell. Norma, Corrine, and a few others in the group who had taken up position a little further down the forest track were also hearing Nightjars and being treated to a fly past. The cold wind began to get through the layers as we began our return to the centre. Now the sound of Nightjars ‘churring’ was all around the clear fell area.



Photos- *Ros Lane*

Norma, our evening species recorder, reported that 24 bird species had been seen or heard during the visit.

Many thanks to Tilhill for allowing us access, to Jim and Ian at the One Planet Adventure Visitor Centre in Llandegla Forest for their help and to our guides, all DNS members, Julie, Norma, Corinne and Ros

*Bob Lane*

# Field Meetings 2018

SUNDAY 9th SEPTEMBER, *Hoylelake*. High tide wader roost meet Kings Gap, Hoylelake at 8.30am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

SATURDAY 17th NOVEMBER, *Pennington Flash Country Park*. Water and woodland birds. Meet PENNINGTON FLASH COUNTRY PARK car park, (pay & display) St Helens Rd, Leigh (SJ645987) at 9.30am, Contact Bob Must 07712 713397 for more details.

SATURDAY 8th DECEMBER, *Marbury Country Park*. Woodpeckers and woodland birds, wintering Bittern and other water birds. Meet at the car park (pay & display) (SJ652764) at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

*Bill Dickinson*

# Indoor Meetings 2018

FRIDAY 21st September. Barry Probin. 'A year on the Moss'

FRIDAY 19th October. Jeff Clarke. 'How to build a Naturalist'

FRIDAY 16th November. – Mike Roberts. 'Birding in Catalonia and Aragon'

FRIDAY 23rd November. 'AGM'

*Corinne Williams*

# Digital Media

**The password for the members area is applicable for until 2019**

<b>User Name</b>	<b>dnsuser</b>
<b>Password</b>	<b>rtnb5834</b>

Web site: [www.deenats.org.uk](http://www.deenats.org.uk)

Email address: [webeditor@deenats.org.uk](mailto:webeditor@deenats.org.uk)

Facebook page: THE MEMBERS OF DEESIDE NATURALIST SOCIETY

# Group Activities

## **Art Group:**

Every second Thursday of the month at 2.00pm

Contact: Kay Mattocks on 01244 821810

## **Photographic Group:**

Every 2nd Wednesday of the month at 2.00pm

Contact: Phil Hotchkiss on 07773 333 346

## **Wednesday Group:**

Every 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 1.00pm. Come and join us for a coffee and a natter about any subject whatsoever.

*All activities are held at the Field Studies Centre*

# **OPEN DAY 2018**

**Sunday October 27th 10am to 3pm**

**High tide at 13.35pm, 9.5 mtrs**

**The Reserve is open to the public. Volunteers are always needed to help. Contact: Julie Rogers 07858 776 387**