

Issue 160

Registered Charity No. 510146

As you will see in the following pages the Society has had some excellent field trips in the first half of the year. Do you have a favourite wildlife place that you love going to? Then why not share it with us and have it incorporated into the field trip programme for 2024. Perhaps there are places you have always wanted to visit but not yet got around to it, so please feel free to contact Bill Dickinson (07968438121) with any suggestions you may have.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

21ST November at 7.00 pm

Community centre, Cable Street, Connah's Quay, CH5 4DZ

All DNS members are cordially invited to come along.

Following the AGM there will be a talk by Keith Offord:
'HEN HARRIERS - Sky Dancers'

Refreshments will be provided.

Sadly, I must report that once again we have a thief in our midst. Not only has bird food been taken from the Dee hide, but the LED light installed inside the West hide disabled entrance has been stolen. Since we maintain trail cams in numerous locations on the site we do have a good idea who the culprit is. Maybe you should do the right thing and consider returning the items anonymously.

This is a reminder for those members who use the online membership system that you can update your address, email address, phone numbers and contact preferences yourselves. To do this you need to go to the membership application and renewal button in the 'join us' tab on the Deenats website and log in using your email address. Alter your details as required and you need to save any changes made of course. Keeping your contact details up to date will ensure you receive Newsletters and any other communication from the Society.

Thanks to Peter Haslem Bill Dickinson, Raymond Roberts, Keith Davies, Glenn Morris and John Briggs for your contributions to this edition of the Newsletter

PLEASE NOTE

The river Clwyd field trip has been moved back to Friday 17th November.
All other details remain the same.

Alan Smethurst

Minera & Clywedog valley – Apr 26th



With an industrial history spanning over 400 years, this site is arguably just as important culturally as it is for wildlife. Originally mined for its lead and later for valuable limestone (until 1994), the reserve now comprises of areas at different stages of re-colonisation. In summer the lime-rich soils create grasslands filled with colour where many species of orchid flourish alongside other rare and threatened plant species such as Moonwort and Pale toadflax.

We began the morning with a general introduction and itinerary for the day before heading into the quarry. The first birds seen or heard were Nuthatch, Stock dove, Crow, Raven, Jay and Long Tailed tits. As we approached the northern rock face of the quarry we saw a colony of some fifty Jackdaws calling and flying about the summit. A Northern wheatear was on the ground and then flitting into a small bush. A Cuckoo was heard calling and in the distance another was perched on a telephone line, there was also a distant view of a Mistle thrush. On the way back to the cars a Pipistrelle bat was seen flying near to one of the old kilns.

From the quarry we moved on to Esclusham mountain. Walking to the abandoned lead mine we had views of Meadow pipets, Northern wheatear, Skylark, Buzzard, Stonechat and Red grouse. The Cuckoo was heard again but no sighting. The sun brought out a couple of butterflies, Orange tip and Red admiral.



The last move was to Nant Mill and the river Clwydog where we finished the day with Song thrush, Mistle thrush, chiffchaff and several Grey wagtails.

The day finished with over thirty species of birds and a daytime flying Pipistrelle bat.

Many thanks to the members who accompanied me on what was an interesting days birding.

Bill Dickinson

Around and About – *Breakwater Country Park*

Breakwater Country Park arose from the aftermath of extensive quarrying of over 7 million tons of limestone over a period of nearly three decades in the late 19th century to facilitate the building of the breakwater for Holyhead harbour.



From the car park, take a stroll down towards the coast through beautiful displays of flowering Thrift, Spring Squill and Birds foot Trefoil (and if you're lucky an Adder) passing along the headland for the short walk back towards Holyhead there will always be the chance of a sighting of harbour Porpoises, Risso's and common Dolphins. Often seen as you approach the industrial areas are grey seals casting their inquisitive eye over you as you traverse the pebble foreshore.

Heading back in the direction of the car park we leave the road (once the old narrow gauge railway line) but follow the line of it on its left hand side where the habitat changes to support silver studded blue butterflies and a variety of moths such as Cinnabar, Buff tip, Ruby Tiger and Silver Y. Nestling amongst the grasses you may come across Bee, Marsh and Spotted orchid There is a small lake just before arriving back at the car park, home to the usual ducks and moorhens whilst the gorse and scrubland all around provides for Stonechats, Willow warblers. Linnets and Wheatears.



Then of course there are the monumental limestone cliff faces of the old quarry, home to Peregrine and Chough. You may be fortunate to catch a Little owl who are also frequent visitors to these cliffs. For the more energetic, the Park is on the Wales Coastal Path giving an opportunity for a significant, but pleasant, walk over to South Stack offering spectacular views over the Irish Sea.

DIRECTIONS: at the western end of Holyhead promenade turn left onto Breakwater road and follow to the end and the car park (Grid Ref: SH227834) there are toilets on site and a shop. Unfortunately, the car park is Pay & Display now, but the shop is open during the summer months.

The rise and rise of the Collared Dove

The progression of the range of the Collared dove (*Streptopelia deaecto*) has been somewhat of a phenomenon over recent decades. A hundred years ago the Collared dove population in Europe was confined to the far southeast of the region in the Balkans and Turkey. The population rapidly spread over the following two decades or so to encompass Northern and Western Europe and finally reaching the United Kingdom in the 1950's. There has been a slight decline in their numbers in most recent years due to factors that may include an increase in the prevalence of trichomonosis or competition from the bigger and more dominant Woodpigeon. (This is also a theory for the decline in Turtle doves as both Collared Doves and Woodpigeons are the more dominant).



COLLARED DOVE FACT
Collared Doves are monogamous birds
and will breed continuously in warmer
regions.

COLLARD DOVE FACT
Females will incubate all day and
hand over to the male at night.

COLLARED DOVE FACT
They lay two eggs per clutch.



The 'eyes' have it !!!

A few of the weird and wonderful eyes that exist in our global wildlife.



CHAMELEON (*Chamaeleonidae*)

Chameleons have really strange eyes in that they are able to move independently which allows it a field of vision of around 300 degrees. They also have the ability to switch their vision between monocular and binocular. As if that wasn't enough its eyes like its body can change colour to blend in with its surroundings!

FOUR EYED FISH (*Anableps anableps*)

The four eyed fish doesn't actually have four eyes but has two which are split in half horizontally allowing it to see above and below the water at the same time. Each half of its eye has its own pupil and its own retina which allows both halves able to function independently.



COCK-EYED SQUID (*Histioteuthis*)

The bizarre appearance of this squid is in part due to the fact that it has one large yellow bulbous eye and one small blue one. It is generally understood that the larger eye is looking for prey silhouetted against the light above, while the smaller eye concentrates on scanning the poorer light of the depths below.



TARSIERS (*Tarsiidae*)

This rather diminutive primate has the largest eyes in relation to their body size of any mammal. Each eye is approximately the same size as its brain. Their eyes may be large, but they are fixed which means their having to rotate their heads to orientate to the surrounding area



DRAGONFLIES (*Anisoptera*)

Relative to their body size dragonflies have large eyes. They often appear to take up most of their head. The compound eye can have up to 28,000 lenses depending on species – more than any other living species. The fact that the eyes cover most of the head means they have almost 360 degrees vision.



REINDEER (*Rangifer tarandus*)

Incredibly the eyes of arctic reindeer change colour as the seasons change. They change from blue in wintertime to gold in the summer. This is in response to the change in levels of light in their northerly habitat.



Ynys Hir RSPB & Cors Dyfi May- 13th



With the mountains of southern Snowdonia to the north and the Cambrian hills to the south, the Ynys-hir reserve is stunning whichever way you look. Ynys-hir itself is a mixture of a Welsh oak woodland with wet grassland, peat bog, reed beds and estuarine salt marshes.

On arrival and meeting up in the car park before setting out onto the reserve one of the Wardens gave us an update on what was happening on the reserve, one item was that the Domen Las hide was closed due to nesting Red Kites. We were told that the Pied Flycatchers and Redstarts were back, but Wood Warblers hadn't been recorded.

From the car park on the water below we could see Little Grebe, Heron, Mallard, flying over were Swallows and closer to the car park was a blackcap moving between the brambles and a birch tree.

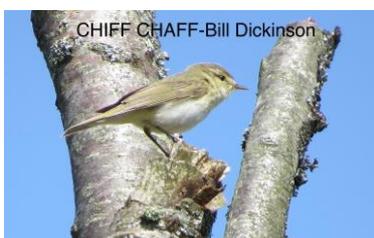
On the woodland trail we had a good sighting of a male Pied Flycatcher and Song Thrush, with a fleeting glimpse of a Great Spotted Woodpecker. On leaving the wood we followed the track leading to the boardwalk heading towards the Ynys Fuerig hide, overlooking the Afon Dyfi. The surrounds were totally different now, peat bog, scrub, reeds and silver birch, as were the birds a Redstart perched high on a dead branch at the top of an oak tree, Garden Warbler, Reed Bunting, Common Whitethroat, Raven, Sedge Warbler and Red Kite. We heard a Cuckoo calling from not far away but unfortunately it was out of sight. From the hide looking over the salt marsh to the water's edge, there were Redshank, Shelduck, Mallards, Mute Swans and Lapwings. On the walk back to the cars we had Buzzard, Mistle Thrush, Swift, Greenfinch Whitethroat and Raven.

After lunch we headed for the Salt Marsh trail, which began with walking down to the railway bridge, through woodland until the trail brought us out into the open, adjacent to the vast expanse of saltmarsh, sightings in this area were of Great Black Backed gull, Herring gull, Whitethroat, Red Kite, Oystercatcher and Pied Wagtail. Back in the visitor centre we had to report that we hadn't seen or heard any wood warblers. It was then back to the car and moving on to Cors Dyfi.

The Dyfi Osprey Project at Cors Dyfi Reserve has been running for fourteen years. In that time, starting from humble beginnings, the Dyfi Osprey Project has grown from a bit of curiosity to a leading osprey conservation, engagement, and research project.

From the Osprey observation tower we were lucky to see the changeover on the nest, the male had caught a mullet and had been eating it on a perch, he then flew to the nest, gave the fish to the female who flew onto the perch with the mullet and the male settled on the eggs, which we were informed should be hatching around the last week of May. Not long after this, two young ospreys flew over the reserve, the warden said that they were probably looking for a ready-made nesting site. Going back to the cars Grasshopper Warbler, Siskin and Reed Warbler were seen.

Bill Dickinson



Ellesmere & Colemere – Jun 10th

A pair of us met at Ellesmere. We had a quick scan of the east side of the mere and the only highlight was a pair of Egyptian geese on Heron Island. Moving on to the Shropshire Wildlife Trust's Wood Lane Nature Reserve we met a Shropshire Wildlife couple who were also DeeNats members and as a result were looking out for our arrival and had opened up the bird hide for us. The reserve is a restored sand quarry with numerous pools which is now a National Nature Reserve. Highlights included Grey plover in full breeding plumage, Red Kite and an Oystercatcher sitting on a wall protecting a nest on the main path. The pools had large carp while Common Spotted and Bee orchids were found along the tracks. The main hide was closed for roof repairs but there was a colony of tree bumblebees. Outside the reserve there was a view into the active sand quarry where there were over 100 Sandmartin holes.



Our next stop was Colemere where there is a new vineyard next to the car park – we were tempted but did not stop. There was a lot of activity in the adjacent hedge which turned out to be a Blackcap and there were plenty of Northern Marsh orchids along the boardwalk. The next section of woodland was very quiet with only Robins and Blackbirds. We had a quick look at the canal and saw Southern Hawker dragonfly and a European Hornet. At the far end of the mere we saw Lapwings but to the east side was fruitless apart from a small flock of Pied Wagtail near the yacht club.

Our final stop was Fenns and Whixall Moss; we followed the disused railway line with Whitethroats in the verges to a pond with Tufted duck. Eventually we found a path onto the Moss itself where there were Brimstone butterflies. Unfortunately, no Hobbies were seen but there was a Kestrel.

Good day out,
Keith Davies.



Mullein (Cucullia verbasci) moth caterpillar

Captured by Glenn Morris on the Reserve mid-June, a voracious Mullein moth caterpillar feeding on would you believe a mullein (*Verbascum*) plant! This is a night flying moth that is well distributed in England, especially the south but is rather scarcer in North Wales.

Has this been recorded before on the Reserve?

Reserve Report – Mar- May

Water levels on the ash pool remained high from April to June reducing the size of the island and its suitability for nesting birds. As a consequence, the nesting Black-headed gulls and Avocets were later than last year. The numbers of breeding pairs of gulls were down compared to last year, probably related to the presence of avian influenza within the nesting colony.

Four pairs of Avocets produced eight young. Breeding Avocet are a Schedule one protected species and illegal to disturb them. Access to the ash pool and field was closed to everyone.

Dead black-headed gulls, an Arctic tern and a Cormorant were noted. You are reminded to leave any dead birds where they are to avoid any risk, to you of AI infection.

A large roost of Black-tailed godwit (1500 plus) and some Knot (400 plus) remained throughout April, May and June.

Waders are starting to return from their breeding sites and huge numbers of Redshanks will take advantage of a safe roost on the bunded pools and can be seen from the Middle hide. Most of these are on passage to their winter-feeding areas with a smaller number remaining on and around the Dee estuary.

Sightings.

March. Goldeneye, Whooper swan, Rock pipit, Common sandpiper, Shoveler, Wigeon, Brambling, Redwing, Fieldfare, Marsh harrier, Sand martin, Wheatear, Chiffchaff, Avocet, Mediterranean gull, Redshank, Twite, Green sandpiper, Peregrine, Bar-tailed godwit.

April. Pintail, Little ringed plover, Willow warbler, Blackcap, Grey plover, Pink-footed geese (4000), Teal, Wigeon, Common tern, Whimbrel, Turnstone, Ringed plover, Redshank, Dunlin, Swallow, Sand martin, House martin, Long-billed dowitcher, Black tern, Eider, Lesser whitethroat, Sedge warbler, Sandwich tern.

May. Arctic tern, Common whitethroat, Goosander, Wheatear, Ruddy shelduck, Reed warbler, Swift.

Pete and Sue Haslem (recorders).

The Humblebee – *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*Burly dozing humblebee!
Where thou art is clime for me.
Let them sail for Porto Rique,
Far-off heats through seas to seek,
I will follow thee alone,
Thou animated torrid zone!
Zig-zag steerer, desert-cheerer,
Let me chase thy waving lines,
Keep me nearer, me thy hearer,
Singing over shrubs and vines.*

*Insect lover of the sun,
Joy of thy dominion!
Sailor of the atmosphere,
Swimmer through the waves of air,
Voyager of light and noon,
Epicurean of June,
Wait I prithee, till I come
Within ear-shot of thy hum,--
All without is martyrdom.*

*When the south wind, in May days,
With a net of shining haze,
Silvers the horizon wall,
And, with softness touching all,
Tints the human countenance
With a colour of romance,
And, infusing subtle heats,
Turns the sod to violets,
Thou in sunny solitudes,
Rover of the Underwoods,
The green silence dost displace,
With thy mellow breezy bass.*

*Hot midsummer's petted crone,
Sweet to me thy drowsy tune,
Telling of countless sunny hours,
Long days, and solid banks of flowers,
Of gulfs of sweetness without bound
In Indian wildernesses found,
Of Syrian peace, immortal leisure,
Firmest cheer and bird-like pleasure.*

*Aught unsavoury or unclean,
Hath my insect never seen,
But violets and bilberry bells,
Maple sap and daffodils,
Grass with green flag half-mast high,
Succory to match the sky,
Columbine with horn of honey,
Scented fern, and agrimony,
Clover, catch fly, adders-tongue,
And brier-roses dwelt among;
All beside was unknown waste,
All was picture as he passed.*

*Wiser far than human seer,
Yellow-breeched philosopher!
Seeing only what is fair,
Sipping only what is sweet,
Thou dost mock at fate and care,
Leave the chaff and take the wheat,
When the fierce north-western blast
Cools sea and land so far and fast,
Thou already slumberest deep,--
Woe and want thou canst out-sleep,-
Want and woe which torture us,
Thy sleep makes ridiculous*

South Stack RSPB & Cemlyn – Jul 6th

South Stack is an island known as a sea stack. It was formed by the wave erosion of sedimentary rocks that once connected the island to the mainland.

The day began dry and cloudy with a stiff wind coming off the sea, but we could hear choughs calling so that was good. As we gathered in the car park, we saw a kestrel and several meadow pipits. We headed to Ellen's Tower - we weren't disappointed – the sea and cliffs were covered with razorbills and guillemots as they were flying out to sea and returning with food for their chicks. The larger gulls, herring, great-black and lesser black-backs were rising on the thermals together with a couple of fulmars. A gannet and a very distant Manx shearwater were seen out at sea.

By the upper car parks there were several choughs in amongst the vegetation and rocks, some of the closest sightings I have had.

By going down a few steps towards the lighthouse three puffins were seen near to the entrance of a burrow. On the far end of the island were a group of kittiwakes that would occasionally leave the ledges and fly around for a few minutes before returning. Other birds seen were stonechat, linnet, house martin, swallow and swift.



Cemlyn Bay is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, renowned for its breeding colonies of the sandwich, common and Arctic terns, Cemlyn Bay is a hive of seabird activity in both spring and summer months.

We had good views of the terns both on the colony's islands and on the rocks within the bay, they were flying to and from the colony over the shingle bank, on which we saw a ringed plover. Unfortunately, there was evidence of bird flu with several dead birds and a couple alive but obviously affected by the disease.

At the back of the colony there was a red breasted merganser with eight chicks, also on the water were a shelduck and mallards. In the bay was a black guillemot and a cormorant, then from the east side a grey heron appeared and flew across the bay. Also seen were house martin, curlew, mute swan, and several little egrets.

That was the end of the scheduled field trip, but we decided to call in to **Cors Ddyga** which produced lapwing, greylag goose, shoveler, reed bunting, meadow pipit, little egret and song thrush. We were also treated to an aerial display by a couple of skylarks which landed very close to us.

In total forty-nine birds were seen, and a good day was had by all. My thanks to those who came along.

Bill Dickinson

Field Events 2023

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. Meet on the approach road to DNS barrier at 9.00am. 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.

Friday 17th 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 at 9.00am. 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

The Rule of Twelfths

I have recently written about the tide rising and falling in the form of a sine curve. It follows that the tide does not rise uniformly.

An accurate determination of the height of water at any time in a tide sequence is very complex. However, the 'Rule of Twelfths' does give a rough approximation of the height of water at any time.

The Rule of Twelfths is as follow: 1 2 3 3 2 1 rising and 1 2 3 3 2 1 falling.

Consider a 30ft tide and bear in mind that the time for the estuary to rise from low water to high water is approximately 6 hours.

Using the Rule of Twelfths

In the first hour the tide will rise $1/12$ of 30ft = 2.5ft

In the second hour the tide will rise $2/12$ of 30ft = 5ft

In the third hour the tide will rise $3/12$ of 30ft = 7.5 ft

In the fourth hour the tide will rise $3/12$ of 30ft = 7.5ft

In the fifth hour the tide will rise $2/12$ of 30ft = 5ft

In the sixth hour the tide will rise $1/12$ of 30ft = 2.5ft

Giving a total rise of 30ft. NOTE: these figures are only approximate.

The fall of the tide is a reversal of these values.

Raymond Roberts

Some wildlife collective nouns

A <i>murder</i> of Crows	A <i>kettle</i> of Hawks
A <i>charm</i> of Goldfinch	An <i>exaltation</i> of Larks
A <i>parliament</i> of Owls/Rooks	A <i>bevy</i> of Quails
An <i>unkindness</i> of Ravens	A <i>whisp</i> of Snipe
A <i>chatter</i> of Starlings	A <i>pitying</i> of Turtle doves
A <i>knob</i> of Widgeon	A <i>plump</i> of Wildfowl
A <i>fall</i> of Woodcock	A <i>herd</i> of Wrens
A <i>smack</i> of Jellyfish	A <i>hover</i> of Trout
A <i>zeal</i> of Zebra	A <i>bale</i> of Turtles
An <i>aggregation</i> of Manatees	A <i>conspiracy</i> of Lemurs
A <i>bloat</i> of Hippopotami	A <i>troubling</i> of Goldfish
A <i>business</i> of Ferrets	A <i>convocation</i> of Eagles
A <i>shrewdness</i> of Apes	A <i>cauldron</i> of Bats

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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