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An OBITUARY for RAYMOND ROBERTS could be written in one sentence
Without Raymond Roberts there would be no Deeside Naturalists' Society.



In the early 1970s Raymond gathered together a few like-minded friends, and they visited the manager of the Power Station (CEGB), at that time, Mr Keith Steward, and suggested some land could be made into a Nature Reserve. Keith was all for the idea and became a constant help to the Society for many years (he also, has passed away). Raymond and his little gang went to night school across the road at the college, where they were taught how to make a Bird Hide (the Middle Hide).

The D.N.S. was then formed in 1973 and officially opened, by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, on 3rd June 1983. I was on the committee for 23 years, so I saw at first hand just how hard Raymond worked. He was a friend to all.

Dear Raymond - Rest in Peace.

Hazel Jones

Alan Smethurst and I represented the Committee at Raymond Robert's funeral. Following the funeral I was approached by Raymond's son John who requested a visit to the Reserve along with Raymond's Granddaughters. At the Field Centre screen they took photographs of the Reserve and showed interest in a pyramid orchid. Unfortunately we could not access the Centre due to the refurbishments. At the middle hide they saw little egrets and enquired as to why there was no water (the sluice gate problem). At the west hide a bird of prey put all the birds up that were on the ash pool and they were surprised to see avocets flying overhead. John commented that the first birds he saw when he first visited the Reserve were oystercatchers and shelduck.

They are hoping in the future to become members,

Keith Davies (chair)

Many thanks to Colin Steward, Keith Steward's son who has provided us with a great deal of archival material from the early days of DNS including early photographs of the initial groundworks on the site.

For those who haven't visited the Reserve for some time, with thanks to Uniper, the Field Centre has now been refurbished with new kitchen and toilets and the main room re-decorated.

Following my unofficial chat with some National Grid boffins who were on site above Flint a few weeks ago, they implied that the work on the overhead cabling above the reserve would probably be carried out in September, but not as yet officially confirmed. Unfortunately access to the Reserve will be closed whilst the overheads are replaced on one side of the pylons. The chap I spoke to implied that the remaining side of the pylons would be replaced around January time. Any information updates will be found on the website.

Alan Smethurst

Llyn Coed y Dinas and Dolydd Hafren 12th Apr



Llyn Coed Dinas is a Wildlife Trust reserve, just south of Welshpool Close to Powis Castle. It was created from an old gravel pit which was quarried to provide material for the creation of the Welshpool by-pass in 1993.

On arriving we found that the permissive footpath was closed so we retreated to the hide overlooking a small lake and were treated to common sandpiper and grey wagtail on a small island at the front of the lake. A search for the little ringed plover proved fruitless but a great white egret appeared along with the usual inland ducks, wigeon, mallard, teal and tufted and surprisingly shelduck. Small birds included: reed bunting, blue and great tit and chiffchaff.

Opposite the hide appeared to be a cormorant roost when a member commented that one cormorant was carrying half a tree! The roost appeared to be an inland nesting site with oystercatchers below and a grey heron in the trees. Other birds present were a pair of great crested grebes displaying, moorhen and coot.

We moved on to find Dolydd Hyfren Wildlife Trust reserve about five miles away with good views of red kite whilst travelling a bumpy road alongside a solar farm. A longish walk gave us views toward the River Severn of both red kite and buzzards circling. Small birds observed along the way were: blackcap, willow warbler, chiff chaff and whitethroat.

The first hide, which can only be described as a signal box with steepish steps gave us an elevated view of a flood plain and a dried out pond. Views toward the River Severn gave us views of swallows, house martins, little egrets and mute swans. A buzzing in the hide revealed queen wasps starting a number of colonies and hibernating ladybirds around the windows.

The second hide was simpler with views overlooking the Severn where sand martins were already using nesting holes in the banks. A great white egret appeared along with oystercatchers, goosander, little egret and a mallard with what looked like day old ducklings. We departed with good views of red kite which meant sightings had reached double figures – lets hope some move north to Flintshire. We totalled just under 50 species for the day.

Thanks to all who joined for an interesting area and day.

Keith Davies

Woolston Eyes 24th May

We met at the barrier to the reserve, which is adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal, before moving the cars to the reserve's car park. The target bird of the day was black-necked grebe and Woolston Eyes is one of the few places in the northwest where these birds breed.

Woolston Eyes Conservation Group is a voluntary organisation formed in 1979, which manages the rich and varied wildlife of the deposit grounds with the agreement of the Manchester Ship Canal Company. Its aim is to promote the study and conservation of the wildlife and habitat of the area with regard to the ornithology.

This is a gated site and immediately after going through the gate to No 3 bed we were on a narrow bridge spanning the River Mersey as it meanders through the reserve. From the bridge we could see a terrapin to one side of the river.

There are several hides around this bed and they provided good views of wild fowl including pochard, tufted duck, gadwall, shelduck and a pair of male garganey. In the reeds and bushes were blackcap, chiffchaff, reed bunting, cetti's, sedge and reed warbler, coal, blue, great and long tailed tits, bullfinch and greenfinch. A marsh harrier was flying along the back of the bed on several occasions and a buzzard above the treetops. A water rail was heard squealing from the reeds. From one hide we were able to view little, great crested and black-necked grebe, but only a single black-necked.



We made our way back to the cars and moved up to No 4 bed, where there is a new viewing platform, giving some amazing views. Geese, we had Canada, greylag and barnacle, ducks included teal, mallard, wigeon and shoveler. Seeing another seven black-necked grebes was a treat but then it got even better - a spoonbill flew in and started feeding in the lake. I would like to thank those that turned up for the day. It is nine years since our last visit I don't think we should wait another nine years before we return.

Bill Dickinson

Reserve Bird Report

Winter waders and wildfowl leave to breed further north and in turn are replaced by returning birds to breed on our reserve. The Ash pool is particularly busy with a colony of noisy Black-headed gulls and Avocets. Both species wait for the water to fall and expose the island. Numbers of breeding Avocet have increased, since the initial pair, in 2021. This year eight pairs produced 12 chicks.

A first for the reserve, a pair of Great crested grebes built a nest in the reeds, were seen to mate and then one sat on the nest for 4 weeks, two humbug chicks can now be seen 'piggy backing' on their proud parents.

A Stork was seen flying over the reserve.

February.

Goosander, Shoveler, Gadwall, Teal, Wigeon, 26 Whooper swans, Black swan, 12 Mute swans, 2000 Pink-footed geese, Water rail, 50 Snipe, 1000 Lapwing, Siskin, Redwing, Spotted redshank, Greenshank, Brambling, 50 Curlew, Red kite, 90 Stock dove, 30 Pied wagtail, Golden plover, Black-tailed godwit, Pintail, 1000 Black-headed gulls.

March.

Avocet, Grey partridge, Knot, Dunlin, Stonechat, Rook, Pintail, Great egret, 1000 Black-tailed godwit, Chiffchaff, Redshank, Little-ringed plover, Wheatear, Kingfisher, 3500 Pink-footed geese, Gadwall, Turnstone, Bar-tailed godwit, Peregrine, White stork (J.Jones), Teal.

April.

Little-ringed plover, Willow warbler, Marsh harrier, Linnet, Wheatear, Sand martin, 20 Sandwich terns, Common tern, Tufted duck, Dunnock, Chiffchaff, Meadow pipit, 12 Great crested grebe, Common sandpiper, Whinchat, Blackcap, Swallow, Kestrel, 28 Whimbrel, 2 Green sandpipers (J. Rogers), Avocets (nest building), Teal, Lesser whitethroat, Grasshopper warbler (S. Haslem), Sedge warbler, Common whitethroat, house martin, Greenshank.

May.

Whinchat, Wheatear, Sedge warbler, Common whitethroat, House sparrow, 30 Whimbrel, Black-headed gulls with young, Rock pipit, 4 pairs nesting Avocet, Little grebe, Swift, Great crested grebe (nesting).



Peter and Sue Haslem (recorders)

Birding in Costa Rica with wild insights Feb 2024 (Part 2)

Day 9: The day would be spent exploring the grounds of the Observatory which cover 352 hectares of primary forests, tropical gardens and grazing lands. Starting with the feeders near the viewing platform Great Curassows, Gray-headed Chachalacas, Collared Aracaris, Crested Guans, Montezumas Oropendolas, Palm, Emerald, Gray and Golden-hooded Tanagers, Cape May Warbler, Black-crested Coquette and Violet-headed hummingbird.

The lush gardens were alive with birds rufous-tailed Jacamar, Song Wren, scaly-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Bicolored Antbird, Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Black-headed Nightingale Thrush, variable Seedeater, Ocellated Antbird, Laughing Falcon, Nightingale Wren, Cinnamon Becard, Rufous-tailed hummingbird and Bronzed-tailed Plumeleteer. Other non-birds seen were White-nosed Coatis, Eyelash Pitviper, Masked Tree Frog and Red-eyed Tree Frog.

Day 10: Off to another part of the lodge this morning La Casona but not before being greeted by a small troop of Spider Monkeys seen from the decking. At La Casona we saw Gartered Trogons, Brown-hooded, White-crowned, and Red-lored Parrots. Going downhill we saw Black-cowled Orioles, Southern Rough-winged Swallows, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, and Long-tailed Tyrant. After lunch we went to the Peninsular Road area for another mix of birds Keel-billed Motmot, White-fronted Nunbird, Rufous-winged Tanager, Rufous-winged Woodpecker, Red-throated Ant Tanager, White-shouldered Tanager, Plain Xenops, Black and White and Chestnut-sided Warblers.



BARE THROATED TIGER HERON

Day 11: Time to move as we leave the Lodge cloud is concealing the top of the volcano. Our first stop is at the Bogarin Trail where we walk along trails constructed in the forest. In the car park we started with White-throated Crakes, along with Russet-naped Wood-rail and Uniform Crake. The trail produced Blue-throated Goldentail, Great Antshrike, Southern Lapwings and Common Pauraque. The star of the trail was a Three-toed Sloth that clung to a very slender branch. Just before we reached our destination the coach parked up in the car park of a supermarket, we were led inside only to see a Barn Owl roosting in the roof oblivious of all the shoppers below.

We arrived at our next stop Selva Verde, green jungle, just before lunch, the accommodation was on stilts with raised walkways. Following lunch, we explored some of the 500 acres of the hotel's rainforest, and the birds were in good numbers, Black Phoebe, Neotropical Cormorant, Turkey Vultures on migration, Sunbittern, Spotted Sandpiper Ringed Kingfisher and a Bare-throated Tiger Heron alongside of the Rio.

Day 12: The day began with a rain shower, but we still assembled for a pre-breakfast jaunt along the river and were well rewarded, with a Muscovy Duck, Bare-throated Tiger Heron, Two Sunbitterns, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Rose-throated, White-winged and Cinnamon Becards, Amazon and Green Kingfishers. La Selva Biological Station, of some 4000 acres of low-level rain forest was only a short coach ride away and produced an array of birds. On exiting the coach our first bird was an incredible Snowy Cotinga, Black-faced Grosbeaks perched close, and a Short-tailed Hawk circled



HOWLER MONKEY



GREEN CROWNED WOOD NYMPH

Once in the reserve we saw a Gray-headed Kite, Gray-rumped Swifts, Broad-billed and Rufous Motmots, Northern Barred and Chestnut-coloured Woodpeckers, White-coloured and White-ruffed Manakins, Black-throated Trogons, Keel-billed and Yellow-throated Toucans, and a pair of Vermiculated Screech Owls. One of the last morning's sightings was of a male Bare-necked Umbrellabird despatch a Red-eyed Tree Frog

After lunch and trying out a hammock which was outside of our room we returned to the pastureland at the side of La Selva. A walk along the track yielded a Bright-rumped Atilla, a pair of squawking Great Green Macaws, White-ringed Flycatcher, Golden-hooded Tanagers, Variable Seedeaters, a yellow Warbler, Grayish Saltator, Yellow Tyrannulets and a Bat Falcon that landed in a tall tree.

Day 13: Heavy rain was falling as we met for the pre-breakfast walk, so we opted for a cup of coffee and watching from the covered balcony attached to the restaurant. No shortage of fruit no shortage of birds Clay-coloured Thrush, Olive-backed Euphonias, Red-throated Ant-Tanagers. The rain eased so we entered the gardens to see Red-billed Pigeon, Boat-billed and Social Flycatchers, Masked Tityras, a couple of Green Ibis, Broad-winged Hawk and a Slaty-tailed Trogon. It was raining again as we reached the gate to La Selva so we took shelter under some car ports which gave good views of Crimson-collared Tanagers, a male Snowy Cotinga, Boat-billed, Flycatchers, Shiny Cowbird, Scarlet-thighed Dacnis, Baltimore and Cowled Orioles

As the rain stopped, we walked along the road and around a small settlement there were Ruddy Ground Doves, Black-headed Saltator, Squirrel Cuckoo, Yellow Warbler, Green Macaws, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Pale-vented Thrush and four Yellow-throated Toucans.

After lunch we headed for the Rio Sarapiquí where a boat was waiting for us. We went up stream, Herons included Tri-coloured, Green and Great Blue and a couple of Green Ibis were seen others include Long-nosed Bats, Spotted Sandpipers, Northern Waterthrush, an Anhinga, Buff-rumped Warbler, Osprey, Ringed and Amazon Kingfishers. A Mantled Howler Monkey was spotted in the trees, and a large American Crocodile took to the water. Time to leave.

Day 14: Time to move and a couple of sites to visit on the way back to San Jose. Pierella Ecological Gardens, this is a truly spectacular butterfly farm run by William and Crystal, his wife. As we had coffee hummingbirds came into the feeders. Male and female, White-necked Jacobins together with Gray-headed Chachalacas, Crested Guans and Blue-gray and Crimson-coloured Tanager and Chestnut-coloured Woodpeckers. The butterfly house was home to Blue Morphos, Blue Crackers, Green Shoemaker, Sapho Longwings, Black and Brilliant Green Malachites.

Our next stop a little further south was another small patch that had been turned into a birding haven. A walk around the site which was led by a local birdwatch, Cope, gave us Green Mango, White-necked Jacobins, Long-billed Hermits, Bronze-tailed Plumeteer Hummingbirds, Green Heron, Pygmy Kingfisher, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, Orange-chinned Parrots, Pale-vented Doves and Red-legged Honeycreepers. Cope took us further into the forest for roosting owls, Spectacle, Crested and a distant Great Potoo. Having checked in for our last night of the tour at Bougainvillea hotel we completed the list and had dinner.



EYELASH PITVIPER



BAY HEADED TANAGER

Day 15: Last day but still a pre-breakfast meeting we made a start on the ten acres of the hotel's grounds, Rufus-tailed hummingbird, Red-billed Pigeon, Greyish Saltator Rufous-naped Wrens, Mottled Owl. After breakfast we headed back to the garden and found White-eared Ground-Sparrows, Lesson's Motmot, Philadelphia and Yellow-throated Vireos, Blue-gray Tanagers and Hoffman's Woodpecker. On the way to the airport, we had sightings of White-tailed Kites and Great-tailed Grackles.

I would like to say a big thank you to our tour organisers and guides Linda and Keith Offord, of Wild Insights, and to Esteban for all his local knowledge in giving everyone on the tour such a fabulous time.

Bill Dickinson

Darters at DNS

The weather during the summer of 2024 was memorably cool, often windy and short of long sunny days, making insect – hunting frustrating, to say the least! However, walking along the Meadow Trail on 23rd July my spirits lifted when I spotted some yellow dragonflies perching up in the bushes. Thinking they were immature male or female Common Darters, which are usually abundant on the reserve at that time of year, I trained my binoculars on one, then another and realised they had very dark, glossy black legs and very strong black lines on the thorax – wrong for Common Darter.

Then one perched on the ground – this one was deep, blood red with a waisted, not straight, abdomen. These were Ruddy Darters and I have never seen them on the Connah’s Quay Nature Reserve before. I consulted my ID guides back home and confirmed other identifying features, such as a black “T” mark on top of the female’s thorax and lack of vulvar scale and the black line over the frons (snout) extending down the sides on both sexes. I returned several times over the following days and found both Ruddy and Common Darters along the start of the Meadow Trail and around the roadside towards West Hide and all around the West Hide car park.

Some days there were more Ruddy than Common Darters! Definitely worth looking out for in future years! Photographs 1-2 show male Ruddy Darters, 3-4 show female Ruddy Darters and 5 shows a male Common Darter. All were taken on the reserve that July.



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2



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4



5

Llandegla Forest 19th June

Llandegla forest is a conifer forest covering some 7 square kilometres of mainly Sitka spruce and a smaller area of larch in Denbighshire to the west of Wrexham. It encompasses the small lake, Llyn Pendinas which was constructed in the late 19th century to provide water for the nearby Brymbo steel works. With new areas of woodland regularly being cleared this provides for ideal habitat for the stunning nightjar on their arrival from Africa in the spring. The photograph below shows the habitat presented by Llandegla.



Our party assembled at the One Planet Adventure Centre as the evening was drawing in and made our way on the fairly long uphill walk up towards our intended viewpoint. We took a detour on the way up to take in Llyn Pendinas (top of the hill), passing a rather vocal song thrush en route. From the dam embankment we got a sighting of a pair of great crested Grebe with three well developed chicks. The lake was rather quiet with birdlife but we did have a few pied Wagtail flitting about on the lakeside, a grey Heron and a flock of some thirty or forty Canada geese at the far end.

We proceeded onward and upward by forest road to our destination for the evening, a large area of recently felled woodland with all the detritus and small shrubs left behind. Settling down on the roadside and providing supper for the world's midge population we waited.

As the light was starting to fade around 9.30pm we got our first sighting of a male Nightjar sweeping fast and low across our vantage point. Then over the next half hour or so we had half a dozen sightings, one memorable one right overhead at about 20 feet.

With the dwindling light it was nigh on impossible to visually identify any birds but we managed to spot a small flight of Chaffinch. We did however hear calls from Cuckoo, tawny Owl, Willow warbler and red Grouse.

The return walk back to the cars needed to be negotiated with a good deal of care as there were dozens of toads crossing the forest roads. Strangely enough all from east to west! Apart from one – there's always one !

Many thanks to Barry Lynes, our guide and to all who turned out to enjoy the rare sight of these iconic birds.

Alan Smethurst

South Stack and Cemlyn Bay 3rd July

South Stack is a reserve where rolling heathland and farmland meet rugged and rocky sea cliffs. Facing South Stack Island and the Irish Sea beyond, the cliffs are a vital breeding ground for guillemots, razorbills and puffins in spring. The rare chough can be seen swooping along the cliffs all year round.

In the afternoon we visited Cemlyn Bay where the islands within the lagoon host the nesting colonies of sandwich, common and Arctic terns.

A strong south westerly wind greeted us as we arrived at South Stack. The cliffs held a good number of razorbills, but they were outnumbered some five to one by guillemots. There were a few nesting kittiwakes and we saw one fulmar on its nest, although others were seen flying.

From the area of Elin's Tower out to sea there were Manx shearwaters, gannets, cormorants, shag and more razorbills and guillemots. A flock of fifteen red-billed choughs flew by to land beyond the top car park.

We ventured down the steps towards the lighthouse and were rewarded with views of four adult puffins. Returning to the cars via an inland route we saw more choughs, stonechats, pied wagtail, linnets and a meadow pipit feeding a juvenile.



After lunch we moved on to Cemlyn Bay, in the Bay were a pair of black guillemots. The islands within the lagoon were a hive of activity with nesting common, sandwich and a few arctic terns, black headed gulls and a pair of Mediterranean gulls.

A couple of grey herons, several oystercatchers and a little egret were on the edges of the lagoon. A dozen gannets were at the righthand side of the mouth of the Bay; we had seen several gannets in a range of plumage from all dark juveniles to full mature adults.



My thanks to the few that turned out on a windy but rewarding field trip.

Bill Dickinson

Antarctica, Falklands & South Georgia

We have just returned from our 'once in a lifetime' trip to Antarctica, The Falklands and South Georgia with HX expeditions on the MV Fram.

What a fantastic experience for all the 21 days at sea. Whale sightings, close up, walking with penguins, seals, birds and icebergs. The weather was kind to us with only two snowy days, the rest of the time blue sky with some windy days.

Most days we had 2 layers, a fleece and the jacket that HX gave us (it was excellent for wind and waterproof too) and over trousers. The muck boots you have to use are very warm. It was coming towards the end of summer (end of February/ beginning of March) so the sea ice was forming fast and sometimes had to revert to plan B or C for landings because of the ice. We managed to go on two landings per day when not at sea.



The Falklands were very emotional in Stanley. We talked to a local about the war, he was only 15 at the time, he told us about the restrictions and the 5pm curfew. South Georgia was an eye opener with the mountains and penguins, a must go to place for a visit. I would definitely recommend going on the 'Fram' as it is a smaller boat and can access the smaller coves. Only 170 passengers on our trip out of 200. The Fram was very stable in the water and we didn't feel any seasickness but some did. Because of a headwind it took four days to sail from South Georgia to Antarctica, All the ships are restricted to 14-16 knots as they have found this speed causes least disturbance to the whales and other marine animals. On all the days at sea we regularly saw whales blowing and diving, some very close to the ship. We had a very close encounter with a humpback when we were out in the Zodiac, it just wanted to play and was circling and diving under our Zodiac for around 15 minutes.

Lots of people are worried about Drake's passage – one of the roughest seas (or calmest at times). We asked the staff how they would rate our crossing out of 10, they said 7 – I've had rougher crossings to Dublin.

Anyone looking for an adventure I would highly recommend this trip. I will post some pictures on the DNS website.

Phil & Joan Hotchkiss



Phil & Joan Hotchkiss

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Friday 21st November 2025 at 7.30pm
Community Hall, Tuscan Way, Connah's Quay, CH5 4SA*

This years talk will be by Bethan Beech, Species Recovery Adviser for Natural Resources Wales. Bethan currently leads on supporting and co-ordinating conservation action for Curlews in Wales as set out in the current Curlew action plan <http://www.curlewwales.org/recovery-plan>, including provision for Curlews in the new agri-environment scheme. She will talk about work underway across Wales to try to reverse the long-term decline in Curlew population.

Bethan and her husband farm near Bryneglwys where they have a pair of Curlews nesting in a restored hay meadow.

This is sure to be a very interesting and enjoyable talk.

Refreshments will be provided

Field Events 2025

September Sun 14th CONNAH'S QUAY RESERVE. Members day, high tide watch for returning waders as they migrate south. Meet Field Study Centre at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

October Thurs 2nd CONWY RSPB AND ESTUARY. Bring RSPB membership card. Meet at Conwy reserve car park at 9.30am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

November Thurs 20th DENHALL LANE , NESS AND RSPB BURTON MERE WETLANDS. Marshland birds and more. Meet at Denhall Lane, Burton, Cheshire Grid ref: SJ303749 at 9.30. Bring RSPB membership card.. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details

December Thur 11th MARBURY COUNTRY PARK. Woodpeckers and woodland birds, wintering Bittern and other waders. Meet at the car park (pay and display) (SJ652764 at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Please carshare whenever possible. Notices will be put on DNS Facebook page and the DNS website prior to the meetings.

Bill Dickinson

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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