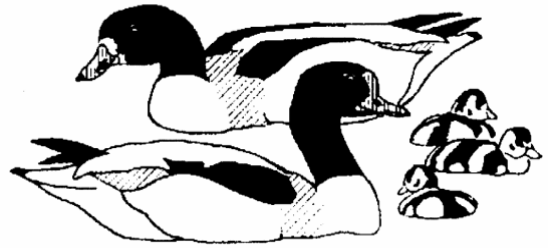


# Newsletter



Issue 127

December 2011

Registered Charity No. 510146

Welcome to the December edition and a new format to the newsletter. This month sees David standing down as the chair of the DNS, a post he has held for eight years. His final report as chairman can be found on page two. I think I can speak for everyone when I say he will be missed and thank him for all his efforts during his tenure as well as welcoming Stewart, who has succeeded him to the role. Thanks also to the work of another stalwart of the committee, Walter Griffiths who has also decided it's time to relinquish the role of Membership Secretary.

The other day I saw a joke in a magazine which showed a shop window with a display of Easter Eggs and one passer by saying to another "I can't believe it's November already". Like the advert I can't believe that it's already December and therefore a year since I took over as the editor. I would like to

take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to the newsletter over the last 12 months, including this edition. Please do keep the articles coming in. Without your support there simply would not be one. There has been a new e-mail address setup for anyone wishing to submit articles or contact me and that is:

[newsletter@deesidenaturalists.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@deesidenaturalists.org.uk)

Alternatively you can reach me on 07413 685 156.

With a complete change of subject I've been asked by one of our members who is also involved with the Flint Male Voice Choir (Côr Meibion y Fflint) to mention they are looking for new members and anyone interested should contact John Cooper on 01244 520669

Finally, I would like to wish all our readers and members a Happy Christmas and Merry New Year.

## Annual General Meeting 2011

The AGM took place on Friday 9th December at 7.30pm in the Connah's Quay Community Centre. The following were elected to the Executive Committee.

|                     |                |                    |                 |
|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Chairman/Secretary: | Stewart Smith  | Secretary:         | Pauline Moulton |
| Treasurer:          | Bob Lee        | Recorder:          | Andrew Wallbank |
| M'ship Secretary:   | Stewart Smith  | Newsletter Editor: | Bob Must        |
| Committee:          | Carl Boswell   | Committee:         | Christine Hamer |
| Committee:          | Helen Simpson  | Committee:         | Cliff Aincham   |
| Committee:          | Joan Hotchkiss |                    |                 |

### !!! STOP PRESS !!!

**Due to work being carried out on the Sub Power Station the National Grid has declared the Nature Trail Out Of Bounds until further notice.**

# Chairman's Report 2011

After eight years as Chairman and three years doing the combined job of Chairman/Secretary, I have decided it's time to hand over the baton to someone else.

I am not the only person leaving this time, Walter Griffiths, Membership Secretary for five years is handing over to Stewart Smith. Walter has computerized the membership records and is to be congratulated on the way he has run this important job. New members have often commented on the efficient way Walter has dealt with their requests, he has also been a good friend to me, many thanks.

When I took on the role the Society wasn't in the best of health, membership was static, finances were low and the infrastructure was in a poor state. Eight years on, I am proud to report the Society is in a very healthy position, membership has doubled, the bank account is very healthy and all the buildings on the Reserve have been replaced or upgraded.

One of the first things that struck me was how little the Field Studies Centre was being used. Janice and I then met John and Daphne McWha and we decided to re-establish the Wednesday Group. In the early days we had great fun especially as John and I have the same birth date in July which resulted in a party every year. This group still meets twice a month on the first and third Wednesday and is still popular, many thanks.

We next set up the Photographic Group which Carl Boswell agreed to host, this again is thriving and not to be outdone Carl's wife Doreen agreed to set up an Art Group which is very popular, again my thanks to you both.

One of my prime aims was to get a formal agreement with National Grid who own the land known to us as the 'Nature Trail'. Although a lease isn't yet in place I am assured by National Grid that once their extensive work is complete a lease will be forthcoming and they will be offering the Society more land and facilities as part of the mitigation. Our Project Manager for the site is Trustee Christine Hamer. Let's hope everything goes to plan and ultimately the Society will have more say in the management of the site.

Another major step forward was the introduction of an official 'Recorder'. Andrew Wallbank now does that job as well as being the Society's Webmaster, I am told we can look forward to an annual report in

the not so distant future.

I have put in a lot of work trying to establish a 'wet' wetland meadow if you know what I mean, the two existing scrapes are dry more often than not. With the exception of EON's Property Services all permissions have been granted and the intention is to make the two existing scrapes into one big scrape with a natural supply of fresh water, let's hope my aspirations can be fulfilled in the not too distant future.

With the co-operation of EON the Society has tried to encourage education groups to visit the Reserve spending a morning at the Power Station and the afternoon with a team of guides from the Society, 2010 was very successful, this year hasn't been as good, this could be down to spending cuts.

Our claim to fame came when BBC2's Natures Calendar filmed on the Reserve and subsequently they quoted in a publication written about the series, that our Reserve was one of the best places to see birds on the estuary.

We brought TV personalities Iolo Williams and Mike Dilger to the Civic Hall in Connah's Quay giving the Society a higher profile. Many other improvements have taken place on my journey, far too many to mention.

One important thing I haven't yet mentioned is the excellent relationship I have had with Paul Day from the Countryside Council for Wales, Fenella Bellinger from Bellinger Design, Vale Contractors, RSPB at Burton and Bill Smith from EON, his team have been excellent to work with and when you consider the money EON spend on the Reserve and believe me that's a lot, we are very fortunate.

With new people come new ideas and a fresh enthusiasm, it is my hope that whoever takes on the role will be encouraged to continue the success story of Deeside Naturalists.

Finally, I would like to thank all the Trustees and numerous other people who have helped me along the way, without them none of this would have been possible.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*David Jones*

## Society News

### Bat Talk And Walk 23rd August

The evening consisted of a talk and slide show presented by Sarah Slater from the Biodiversity Office for Flintshire. Followed by a walk along the reserve roads with bat detectors.

Before the evening I was not sure how many people shared my fascination for 'creatures of the night'. However as the evening drew near, I had to contact Sarah to ask if there was a limit to the number of people she could manage as the enquires were continuing to come in. Sarah's generous reply was there was no limit as long as we could all hear a detector.

The evening was calm and dry in contrast to the forecast, the group assembled in the field study centre where we had an initial distraction of a sighting of the Kingfisher.

Sarah gave a very informative and interesting talk and presentation. She explained the life style and habitats of the different UK bat species, including the role they play in controlling the insect population. A Pipistrelle can consume 3000 midges in a night! Records have shown that Pipistrelles can live for 16 years and Noctules for 9 years. She also confirmed that they do not get stuck in hair and there are no vampire bats in the UK! We were treated to a close encounter with a bat product ...Sarah had brought some bat 'poo' collected earlier that day!

Following the talk and refreshments, it was dark enough to go out armed with bat detectors to see and hear what was about on the reserve.

Bats echolocate at different frequencies so Sarah and I set our detectors at 50 hz to detect Pipistrelles and 25hz to detect Noctules the two spe-

cies we were likely to find. Noctules fly soon after sunset. As we left the field study centre I briefly picked up a Noctule on the detector. Unfortunately that was the only Noctule that was detected.

Common Pipistrelles were detected as we walked down the drive. This is a typical environment for them flying along tree lines.

When we reached the helipad no one was ready to return to the field study centre. We split into two groups one going towards the west hide the other going towards the gate. Both groups detected Common Pipistrelles.

We all eventually returned to the field study centre to conclude the evening without mishap in the dark or loss of detectors.

Sarah has suggested that we contact the local Bat Conservation Group to carry out a survey on the reserve to identify with more accurate detectors which species are on the reserve.

*Helen Simpson*

P.S 'They say never work with children and animals'. On leaving the reserve I noticed bats flying around the lights by the gate. I identified both Noctules and Soprano Pipistrelle with my bat detector . Unfortunately everyone else had gone by then so were not able to enjoy the spectacle.

*P.P.S Partway through the walk the word BAT came up on one of the detector displays. We asked Sarah was that to indicate bats were around. "No" she replied. "It indicates a low battery". Ed*

### On a Lighter Note:

A man goes to an auction to buy a Parrot. After a close fought bidding contest he wins. After the auction he says to the Auctioneer "I hope he can talk." "You don't need to worry about that" said the Auctioneer, "Who do you think was bidding against you"?

Definition of a committee (sent in by one of our readers). A dark avenue down which good ideas are lured and quietly strangled. *I've always liked the one that says; 'the camel was a horse designed by a committee'. Ed.*

## Society News

### Visit To RSPB Burton Mere 24th September

**W**hen I agreed to lead the field trip in 2010 I had no idea the new Reserve would be officially opened the day before our trip, this was purely good luck rather than good judgment.

I was invited to the opening on the Friday and knew our party was in for a treat, Iolo Williams; Welsh TV wildlife presenter had cut the ribbon to officially open the new part of the Reserve.

The Saturday was kind to us weather wise and twenty eight of our members were met by RSPB Warden Geoff Robinson who had kindly agreed to take us on a guided tour to show us the new features.

The new Centre was impressive with views across pools and a new scrape, Geoff then took us into a wooded area showing us the newly planted reed beds and lily pad pool; this will attract the likes of dragonfly and damselfly.

Our final journey was to walk on newly laid paths to a brand new hide overlooking more pools; the hide was built by a specialist company and was very impressive.

Having thanked Geoff for the guided tour, he then returned to base leaving the group to do their own thing, at this point four of us decided to go to the Old Quay at Parkgate for a carvery costing less than £4 each, great value.

We decided to go back to Burton but this time to Inner Marsh farm. We were told that in the future a path from the new part of the Reserve will link up with the old part and the entrance to Inner Marsh will be blocked off.

On the way to the hide we met Walter Griffiths and Bill Evans who were scurrying off to Parkgate having received a message that 2 Great White Egrets had been seen, we continued to the hide and were rewarded with Little Stint and Golden Plover.

Suddenly there was a cry of excitement as the 2 flew in, the Egrets that is, not Walter and Bill. This finished off a splendid day and I congratulate Colin Wells and his team for creating a stunning Reserve which I for one intend to visit many more times.

*David Jones*

### Trip To Point Of Ayr 12th November

**A**fter the torrential rain the previous night the morning weather looked far more promising. A small group of seven set off along the dyke wall in sunshine with little breeze.

The high tide was two hours away but there was already plenty of bird activity on the shore. Several stops were made along the route to view the birds that were already collecting at the roost site. There was also a lot of activity in the trees and bushes along the walkway.

As we were walking into the sun it was difficult to identify the small birds flying in front of us, Greenfinch and Chaffinch were identified. One of the drainage ditches gave a good view of a group of roosting Redshank and Dunlin.

A few yards from the platform which was the RSPB hide a stoat ran across the path.

The view from the platform gave views of the thousands of birds on the estuary, the numbers alone were impressive with very good close views of Pintail ducks. However the high spots were two Short-eared Owls hunting and perched on the opposite side of the 'point'. For some this was surpassed by three Brent geese (dark belied). After full high tide and a good time spent viewing the group returned with the sunlight now behind the flocks of small birds which were identified as Linnets.

*Helen Simpson*



## Society News

### Open Day 30th October

The open day was a huge success with nearly 200 visitors being recorded through the gates.

The Field Studies Centre, where the visitors were plied with tea and coffee, also had displays from the Photographic and Art clubs. The rain stayed away and



the high tide showed the area at its best.

Even the inhabitants of the reserve got in on the act. Some welcome and some, possibly, not so welcome.



## Quiz (answers on page 8)

### Cryptic Birds

Decipher the clues to obtain the name of the bird.

1. This bird knows a thing or two.
2. Round and round and round and round.
3. Grassy place for a gala.
4. 2 oz. In a monarch's dinner.
5. Sailed the seas with silver.
6. Are you being served Mr...
7. Little Margaret eats humble.
8. The Angler ruler.
9. Female jet.
10. Have you been running?
11. In order, attack timber.
12. Is this a happy dog?
13. Sharp demand for payment.
14. Bit of an edge.
15. Small measures of cereal waste.

*(Thanks to Hazel Jones for these and there are 15 more next issue Ed.)*

### Miscellany:

- a. Remove the first letter from a British animal to leave a beast of burden.
- b. What have the following in common. Toucan, Kangaroo, Bear, Seal, Pelican, Giraffe and Polar Bear *(along with many others)?*
- c. What group of insects include German, American and common?
- d. What is a group of Hedgehogs called?

### National Parks

Match the Park with the year of designation.

- Brecon Beacons
- Peak District
- New Forest
- Dartmoor
- Northumberland
- South Downs
- Exmoor
- Broads
- Cairngorms
- Pembrokeshire Coast

Years: 1951, 1951, 1952, 1954, 1956, 1957, 1989, 2003, 2005, 2010

*(No it's not a mistake there are two 1951's Ed)*

# Butterflies On The Reserve 2011

After the Butterfly Workshop held on the reserve in April 2011, Jan Miller (workshop tutor) met a group of DNS members who had attended to give guidance on setting up transects on the Nature Trail area. The recording paperwork was explained prior to walking the area, dividing into transects and recording butterflies in each transect. Following on from this, transects were also established around the Wetland Meadow area. Each area is divided into 5 transects for the different habitats and take 40 - 60 minutes to walk. It is important not to stop and wait for the butterflies but to record what you see as you are walking each transect. This ensures that it is a true record. The maps below show the areas where transects have been established.

It is best to record between 10.45am and 15.45pm with the temperature at least 13°C, preferably above 17°C, on a bright day with at least 40% to 60% sunshine. Unfortunately this year the weather over the summer months was mixed with cool days and rain. The wind speed ideally should be no more than Beaufort Scale 5 unless the transect is sheltered. See the bottom of page 6 for an explanation of the scale. The recording sheet has space for this information for each transect.

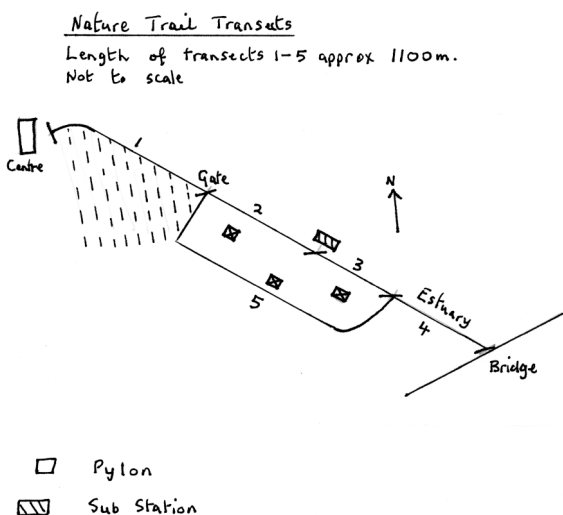
The butterfly transects are a way of recording changes in the abundance and varieties of butterflies on the site on a year to year basis. For 2011 several DNS members recorded butterflies on the nature trail and around the wetland meadow (see maps). In 2012 it is planned to carry out transect recording in both areas, weekly/fortnightly where possible, between April and end August/early September depending on the weather.

In 2011, 17 varieties of butterfly were recorded. These were: Red Admiral, Speckled Wood, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Orange Tip, Small White, Gatekeeper, Green Veined White, Painted Lady, Large White, Small Copper, Common Blue, Dingy Skipper, Large Skipper, Small Skipper and Meadow Brown. There were also unconfirmed reports of Grayling seen around transect 5 on the Nature Trail so hopefully this can be confirmed in 2012. If you would like to be involved in the butterfly survey in 2012, meetings can be arranged with you at the centre to explain the recording system and walk the transects, please contact me on either 01352 716273 or e-mail me on:

[christine.hamer@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:christine.hamer@tiscali.co.uk)

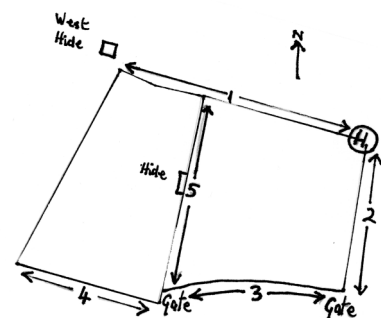
Finally, I would like to thank everybody who helped with the recording in 2011 and look forward to good results in 2012.

*Christine Hamer*



West Hide & Wetland Meadow Transects.

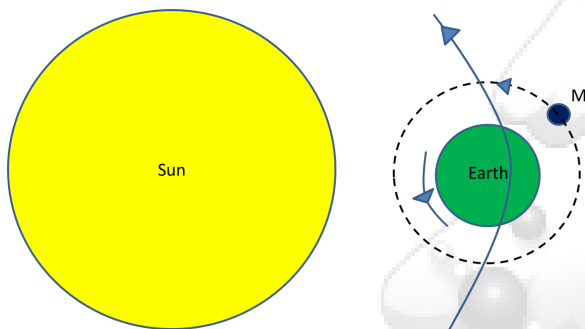
Length of transects 1-5 approx 2250m.  
Not to scale



# Learning Curve

## RIVER DEE TIDAL CYCLE

Two or three weeks ago members of the Society will have noted a number of 32 ft tides running up the river. The first sign of an incoming tide is the bore which can be seen from the west hide as it moves up the river alongside the revetment. The bore normally reaches Connah's Quay docks about two and a half hours before high water, although people can be disappointed with the bore at this point. The river channel broadens out at the docks and the bore is much reduced in size perhaps to two or three inches high if at all. However the bore reasserts itself as it moves on towards Queensferry and Sandycroft where the river is canalised.



The tide is brought about by the gravitational pull of the moon on the waters of the earth, sometimes aided by the gravitational pull of the sun. The bigger tides are brought about when the gravitational effects of the sun and moon are in line with the earth maximising the gravitational effect. Incidentally the term spring in this case is not a seasonal term but is a derivative of the word springen meaning fullness of water.

It is remarkable that the moon and the sun being so far away, 252 thousand miles and 93 million miles respectively, should have the effect of raising the water on earth to produce a tidal bulge through which the earth rotates to produce our tides. When the gravitational pull of the moon and that of the sun are at an angle to each other the overall gravitational effect on the earth is much reduced, the tides are smaller and are called neaps.

Why two tides a day? When the moon is in line it pulls on the water on the moon side of the earth causing a tidal bulge. The moon also pulls on the earth causing a tidal bulge of water on the other opposite side of the earth. For a better understanding of this last phenomena try pulling a plate of jelly across a table the plate being the earth and the jelly the water.

The tide has the effect of freshening up the mud-flats by depositing particles of food on which invertebrates and fish feed. When the tides recede the waders and wildfowl move in to feed on the invertebrates and so the vital estuary cycle continues.

The next time you view the tide coming in on our planet earth, which is activated by the moon, a satellite of the earth and the sun, a star, which are both many thousands of miles away marvel at these things.

*Ray Roberts*

## BEAUFORT SCALE (see page 5 for further details)

| The Beaufort Scale |       |                 |                                   |
|--------------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Code               | MPH   | Description     |                                   |
| 0                  | 0-1   | Calm            | Smoke rises vertically            |
| 1                  | 1-3   | Light air       | Slight smoke drift                |
| 2                  | 4-7   | Light breeze    | Wind felt on face & leaves rustle |
| 3                  | 8-12  | Gentle breeze   | Leaves & twigs in constant motion |
| 4                  | 13-18 | Moderate breeze | Raises dust & small branches move |
| 5                  | 19-24 | Fresh breeze    | Small trees in leaf begin to sway |
| 6                  | 25-31 | Strong breeze   | Large branches move & trees sway  |

## Group Corner

### DNS Photography Group

The group attracts around twenty five members and meets at 2pm on the second Wednesday of each month in the Field Studies Centre.

This is a social group with a good mix of beginners and more experienced photographers aiming to share an interest in all forms of photography through presentations and practical sessions.

If you would like more information please contact the convener.

Carl Boswell

tel. 01352 757309.

### Art Group

The DNS Art Group meets each month on the second Thursday at 2pm in the Field Studies Centre. We have about twelve members who enjoy painting together in various mediums.

Earlier in the year we had a very stimulating demonstration by Jan Gardner who was the Artist in Residence for Deeside. We held an exhibition at the October meeting which attracted many favourable comments.

If you enjoy painting and would like to join us you would be very welcome.

Doreen Boswell

tel. 01352 757309.

## Looking Forward

### FLOWERS ON THE RESERVE

As we pass the shortest day of the year on December 22nd, will there be any flowers showing?

It will probably be cold and wet, but towards April there will be a few flowers about. They are mostly very small ones such as Chickweeds, Daisies, Dandelions, Shepherds Purse, Whitlowgrass and Danish Scurvy Grass along the path edges brought from the coast with the salt spreading on the main roads.

This will be followed by English Scurvy Grass *Mary Wright*

on the salt marsh. Larger and more easily seen flowers should include Red Dead Nettle, Forget-me-nots and Lesser Celandines. Last year, there were Snowdrops growing near the helipad and Spanish Bluebells but both may have been planted!

By the time April is here we can start to look forward to the number of Spring flowers increasing and the reserve becoming more colourful.

## Answers to Quiz

Cryptic Birds  
1. Owl, 2. Tern, 3. Fieldfare, 4. Blackbird, 5. Parrot, 6. Peacock, 7. Magpie, 8. Kingfisher, 9. Hen Harrier, 10. Puffin, 11. Woodpecker, 12. Wagtail, 13. Razorbill, 14. Partridge, 15. Chaffinch.  
National Parks  
Breccon Beacons 1957. Peak District 1951. New Forest 2005. Dartmoor 1951. Northumberland 1956.  
South Downs 2010. Exmoor 1954. Broads 1989. Cairngorms 2003. Pembrokeshire Coast 1952.  
Miscellany:  
a. (F)Ox, b. They've all been used in Guinness adverts, c. Cockroaches, d. An Array.