

Issue 151

December 2019

Registered Charity No. 510146

Welcome to the December edition of the Newsletter.

The weather was kind to us for our earlier than usual Open Day which had a good turnout of 67 on site. Mr Kingfisher was his usual obliging self with many sightings throughout the day from the Field Study Centre. Many thanks to 'Focal Point' for their optical display, Ken Mullins books and to Kay Mattocks for putting on a display of work by the Society's Art Group members.

It is that time of the year when we clean, sterilize and repair the 40+ nest boxes we maintain on the site and 60+ boxes on local farms. This is an important accommodation supplement to our resident bird population as trees are not exactly abundant on the Reserve. Last summer's 100 nest boxes on the Reserve and adjacent farmland produced a grand total of 377 fledged chicks plus 23 unhatched eggs. If anyone would care to get involved and lend a hand in December please contact:

Betty Lee (bettylee_uk@internet.com) or
Alan Smethurst (alansmethurst44@gmail.com).

If any members have any bird sighting lists for 2019 on the Reserve, it would be most helpful and appreciated if you could forward a copy on to Peter Haslem (Peter.haslem@btinternet.com) for our Reserve records.

Further to the article in the August issue of the Newsletter, Glenn Morris has submitted an addendum to the addendum of his book "Birds of Connah's Quay Nature Reserve and Oakenholt Marsh" :

Pratincoles still to come!

The historical (1988) Collared Pratincole on the Reserve, mentioned in a recent Newsletter, is not an acceptable record after all (not, that is, without a photograph or full description). Colin Wells has "reminded" me that the Pratincole accepted by British Birds on June 2nd 1988 was Black-winged and not Collared. Not only that, it was watched the whole day from dawn to dusk on June 2nd at Inner Marsh Farm, Burton and so cannot have been seen on our Reserve the same day, so any Pratincole would be a "new species" for CQNR and well worth looking out for (and photographing!)

Alan Smethurst

Chairman's Report

After the AGM on the 15th November I was pleased to be re-elected as the Chairman for the DNS. I was also disappointed that with a membership of over 450 only 20 members attended with 10 apologies. As with every group you need a committee to run it, unfortunately the position of secretary is still vacant. As this is one of the posts that NEEDS to be filled to be able to run as a charity group, I am asking if any member is willing to take up this post. The secretary will be responsible in taking the minutes at the committee meetings and at the AGM. If we cannot fill this post the future of the DNS could be in jeopardy of folding.

Furthermore, Bob Lane will be standing down as Membership Secretary next spring and a replacement for him will be required. An overlap period would be very useful, so if you feel you can help the Society out in this respect please contact Bob Lane (membership@deenats.org.uk) for information.

Wednesday group. The numbers are holding up with 8 to 12 members at most meetings. This group is open to all members to get together have a drink and natter about everything, and stroll along the reserve.

Photography Group. As numbers continue to drop to 3 or 4 people, I am only going to continue with the group for a few more months unless the numbers increase. If anyone would like to take over running the Photography Group please let me know.

Phil Hotchkiss.

Indoor Meetings 2020

All indoor meetings will be held at Connah's Quay Community Centre, Tuscan Way, off Chapel Street, CH5 4DZ and will start at 7.30pm.

Friday January 17th: Norman Sadler: "Arctic Oddesey"

Friday February 28th: Phil Hotchkiss: "Beneath the waves"

Friday March 27th: Richard Gulliver: "The Botanist gin-our part in a global success story"

Friday September 18th: Ron Plummer "Heads and Tails" – a visit to Chile and Easter Island

Friday October 16th: Giles Pepler: "TBC" (WOS and the new birds in Wales book).

Friday November 13th: AGM

Wildlife Report Sep-Nov

It has been a quiet season on the reserve for many aspects of the natural history world, played in part by the extremes in weather we have had. It was a poor season for the reserve fungi, with it being far too dry until the 3rd week in September and then far too wet for weeks after. A few warm days at the end of October produced what may be the last butterfly record for 2019. A couple of autumn sessions of moth trapping produced new species for the reserve.

MOTHS - Overall 2019 has not been a great year for moth recording on the reserve, the cooler, wetter summer and horrible end to September and into October meant that chances to get down to the reserve to put the trap out in ideal 'mothing' conditions were few and far between, but it does mean there are lots still to find in 2020.

Pink-barred Sallow (*Xanthia togata*) - whilst a common species trapping in October produced the first record for the reserve.

Black Rustic (*Aporophyla nigra*) - another common species but a first for the reserve during October.

BUTTERFLIES

Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) - the last record of a butterfly on the reserve this year appears to be a single Red Admiral on the 24th and 25th October.

Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*) - one still on the wing on the 19th October.

MAMMALS

Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) - at least one, probably two were seen over high tide from West Hide on the 18th October for around five minutes.

Grey Seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) - one was seen on the 17th October at high tide from West Hide and another (same?) was seen on the 19th October.

Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) - a quite bold adult male was seen a few times during daylight around the reserve during October.

FUNGI

Crystal Brain (*Myxarium nucleatum*) - an abundance of this species on rotting wood during November all around the reserve.

Merismodes anomala - plenty of this tiny fungi on the rotting wood during November.

Yellowing Knight (*Tricholoma scalpturatum*) - lots of this species around the reserve during October, particularly between Dee and Middle hides.

Arrhenia rickenii - this year has been great for this small species which grows on mosses, I have seen hundreds of fruiting bodies all around the reserve during October.

MOSESSES & LIVERWORTS RECORDING DAY ON THE RESERVE

5th January 10am - 4pm

In 2020 I am hoping to really add to the knowledge of the species that occur on the reserve, with this in mind over the year I will be arranging for a few recording days for people to come along and help record certain aspects of the wildlife world that are under-recorded. The North Wales Non Flowering Plant Group will be coming down on the 5th January to help record the species of mosses & liverworts on the reserve (currently nothing is known about them!). To keep the group size manageable if anyone is wishing to come down, help record and learn about these fascinating little plants then please email me (david@discoverthewild.co.uk) as places will be limited - it's free!

If you have a specialism in a 'niche' area of wildlife recording and would like to help, or if you wanted to know more about a specific area of wildlife on the reserve (mammal recording, moth trapping, flower identification) then please let me know and I may be able to arrange a day of it.

Photos: From top - Pink-barred Sallow, Black Rustic, Arrhenia rickenii.

David Winnard.



Field Meetings 2020

Sun 12th JANUARY-BEDDMANARCH BAY AND INLAND SEA. The Beddmanarch is a site of special scientific interest (SSSI), the site comprises the area of coastal salt-marshes, mud-flats and shallow coastal water. The Inland Sea is adjacent to the bay but isolated by the A55. Meet Penrhos Coastal Park at 10.00am. Meet at FSC 8.30am for car share, prompt. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121

Sun 9th FEBRUARY-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 FSC at 8,15 for car share prompt. Contact Bill Dickinson on 07968438121

Sun 8th MARCH-DENHALL LANE, NESS AND RSPB BURTON MERE WETLANDS. Marshland birds and more. Meet Denhall Lane, Burton, Cheshire (SJ303749) at 9.30am. Bring RSPB membership card. Contact Alan Smethurst 07896758222

Sat 18th APRIL-CONWY VALLEY AND SPINNIES. Hawfinches and waders. Meet at FSC 8.30am for car share, prompt. Meet at Caerhun Church, Conwy (SH774706) at 9.30am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121

Sun 10th May- MINERA AND CLYWEDOG VALLEY. A recently opened NWWT site. Starting in the old Minera Lead Quarry, scanning the open quarry faces for ravens and raptors, we will then have a riverside stroll. Meet in the reserve's car park (SJ258519) at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121

Thurs 25th JUNE-LLANDEGLA FOREST. Nightjars. EVENING MEETING 8.30pm at Llandegla Forest visitor centre (SJ240524). Members please email - membership@deenats.org.uk - to book because numbers may be limited. Contact Bob Lane 07985704963/01352770633

Sun 12th JULY - WILDLIFE RECORDING DAY. A guided walk of our Reserve looking at the flowers, fungi, insects, birds and with even the possibility of setting up some camera traps. Meet at the FSC car park at 9.00am. Contact Dave Winnard 07533 132 129

Sun 23rd AUGUST-LLANFAIRFECHAN AND MORFA MADRYN. For returning waders and sea birds. A short walk will take us to an area of salt marsh with a shingle spit and beyond this the pools of Morfa Madryn Nature Reserve. Meet at FSC 8.00am for car share, prompt. Meet in the beach car park by the Pavillion Cafe, off junction 15, A55 at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson on 07968438121

Sun 6th SEPTEMBER-HILBRE ISLAND. Hilbre over high tide, waders, terns and skuas. Meet at West Kirby Sailing Centre, Dee Lane (SJ213869) at 9.00 am. Contact Alan Smethurst 07896758222

Sun 15th NOVEMBER -PARKGATE. High tide watch as the incoming tide forces the birds into viewing range. Meet at FSC 8.30 prompt. Meet at the Old Baths Car Park at 9.00am. Contact Alan Smethurst 07896758222

Sun 6th DECEMBER-CONWAY RSPB AND ESTUARY. Winter ducks and waders. Meet at FSC 8.00am for car share, prompt. Meet at the RSPB car park at 9.00am. Bring RSPB membership card. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121

Bill Dickinson

Rhydymwyn & Coed y Felin 11th Aug

There was a steady drizzle as we assembled in the car park of Rhydymwyn Nature Reserve where we were met by Malcolm Down who gave us an introduction to the site, its history and present day use.

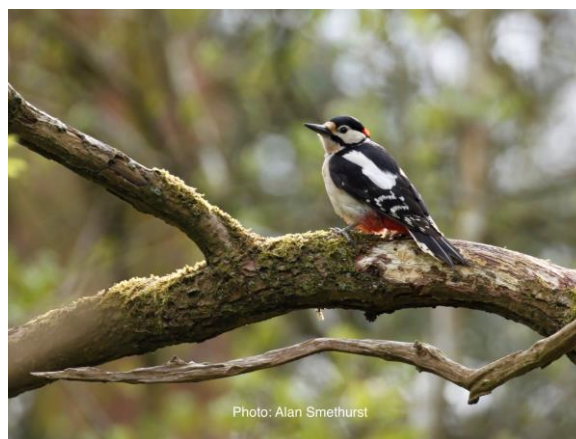
Rhydymwyn is a fascinating juxtaposition of World War Two industrial buildings surrounded by a natural environment with a rich diversity of wild flower meadows and mature woodland with the River Alyn flowing through. This is ideal habitat for a good mixture of birds, butterflies and other insects and fauna. The special area of the sensory garden with plants that provide smell, touch and sound enhances this attraction

Our group meandered along the by-ways of the site, enjoying the sweep of purple rosebay willow herb with its understorey of meadow sweet, knapweed, wild carrot and hypericum. Due to the prevailing weather conditions there was not a great deal on the wing. Several species of butterfly: large white, speckled wood, wall brown, and a yellow-underwing moth emerged as the showers eased, while overhead a flock of Jackdaws, an agitated Buzzard and a few Gulls wheeled and cried.



As we returned along the high level trail the lovely surrounding woodland sheltered blue, Great and Long-Tailed Tits, Nuthatch, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff and Jays. A Sparrowhawk being chased by Magpies added excitement to the morning.

After lunch in the comfort of the Centre we completed the day's field meeting at Coed Y Felin, a short car journey from Rhydymwyn. Again, a lovely walk in Welsh woodland. A Goldcrest greeted us at the entrance gate and amid the usual woodland species the birding highlights were a Great-Spotted Woodpecker and Bullfinch with Raven close above. A group of huge bracket fungi were growing at the side of the path at the base of a sycamore tree.



I would like to thank the members who attended our August field meeting in typical British summer weather, and my special thanks to Malcolm Down and Rhydymwyn Reserve for their hospitality.

Bill Dickinson

Chile & Easter Island

As a weekend break Chile and Easter Island may be stretching it a little bit but as a holiday destination with a difference it is well worth considering.

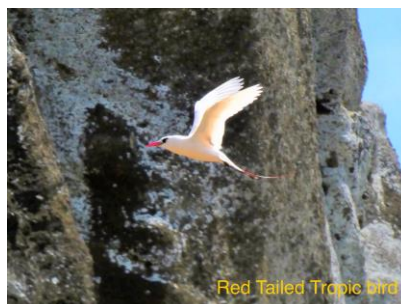
My wife Jane and I looked at the possibility a couple of years ago and were surprised to find a reasonable priced package tour from an established UK based company. For just over £3,000 each we would have a 12 night fully escorted tour with air fares, transfers, meals and excursions included.

The main flight departs London Heathrow, but connections from the likes of Liverpool or Manchester can be arranged (at an extra cost), to arrive at Sao Paulo, Brazil, for the transfer to an onward flight to Santiago, Chile.

At Santiago we were met by our guide who drove us, and the other six members of the group, to our hotel. The two day stay here included a very comprehensive, informative and pleasant walking tour of the city on day one. This was followed by a full day wine tasting at vineyards in the Colchagua Valley.

Day three we flew North to Calama from where we were driven to San Pedro de Atacama and a three night stay. Here we were given guided tours of The Valley of the Moon, Death Valley, Salar de Atacama, Lake Miscanti and Geysers del Tatio (at an altitude of 4,320 metres above sea level). There was also free time to explore the delightful desert town of San Pedro de Atacama.

During the three days we saw herds of llamas and vicugna, mountain vizcacha (similar to a rabbit but with a long tail), three species of flamingo, Puna Teal, Puna Tinamaou, Puna Plover, Horned coot, Baird's Sandpiper and a variety of other small birds.



Our fourth day saw us fly back to Santiago for one night before flying out to Easter Island.

The island is not what we expected, far from being a desolate speck of rock in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, the island has plenty to offer. During our stay we were treated to tours of Ahu Tongariki (with its famous 200 metre long plinth and 15 standing Moai), Rana Raraku quarry (where the Moai had been carved from, some weighing up to 270 tonnes) and the ancient village of Orongo perched high up on the rim of the extinct volcano Rano Kau. Here, we were told, was where the Birdman ritual took place. Each year one brave male from each of the island's tribes would scale down the sheer cliff face, swim across shark infested waters to a small rocky outcrop and collect a sooty tern's egg. The first to return to the top of the cliff, complete with unbroken egg, was honoured as Birdman.

Whilst on the island we saw, green turtles, frigate birds, red tailed tropic birds, Southern Caracara and mourning gecko.

There was plenty of time to explore the main town of Hanga Roa with its colourful bars and restaurants, sample the exotic flavours of the island's food, and relax on the beaches looking out over the ocean.

Our return to UK was via Santiago, Sao Paulo and Heathrow.

If you are looking for somewhere different, I can strongly recommend a visit to Chile and Easter Island

Ron Plummer

Connah's Quay Reserve 15th Sept

It was a cloudy overcast day, threatening rain, giving no hint of the superb birding to come. The first bird seen, Kingfisher, from the Field Studies Centre screen, was our constant companion throughout the day, showing well at the East Hide, then the Middle Hide, fishing and hovering right in front of us at the Feeder Hide, and even giving a 'fly past' from the West Hide.



The schedule was to birdwatch from all the hides, arriving at the West Hide 2 hours before high tide at 1pm. As we walked along the Reserve looked lush and verdant, hedgerows full of blackberries, rosehips, hawthorn and guelder rose berries, with seed heads, thistles and teasels everywhere. A virtual banquet for birds.

From the East Hide were 8 Greenshank, a Great White Egret, Little Egrets plus lots of Redshank, Lapwing and Starling. A Spotted Redshank tried to disguise itself within the throng. A single Curlew probed the water in front of us.

A Kestrel hovered over the Middle Hide while Shoveler (in eclipse) Mallard and Teal searched for food in the shallows while a bedraggled Grey Heron posed on the bank. 2 Little Grebe dived enthusiastically.

As time was pressing it was decided to move on to the West Hide to be ready for the incoming tide. The edges of the bunded pool were filled with hundreds of Black-tailed Godwits that had come across from the estuary. A pair of Tufted ducks, Little Grebes and several Coots and Moorhens were in the open water and a Buzzard sat on the wire fence to the right flanked by Crows. A Peregrine perched atop the pylon at the back checking on lunch availability.

On the estuary side of the West Hide things moved pretty fast. Where the canalised section of the River Dee starts great crested grebe sailed past on the English side while the Welsh side held a Red Breasted Merganser. On the mud flats numbers of Little Egrets, Shelducks, Oystercatchers, Redshanks and Spotted Redshanks, Great Black-Backed, Lesser Black-Backed, Herring and Black Headed gulls and Cormorants showed well. As the tide was rising over the seaward edge of the outer marsh 3 Wigeon were seen amongst the Mallards. Shortly before the peak of the tide Ringed Plover, Dunlin, a single Curlew Sandpiper, 1 Little Ringed Plover furiously chased for food. Half a dozen Greylag and Canada geese sailed along while a distant Marsh Harrier hunted over the Dee marshes.

A convivial lunch was taken in the comfort of the Field Studies Centre, following which, a meander back down the track to the Dee Hide allowed us to increase our bird tally as the feeding station was full of Gold and Greenfinches, Long Tailed, Great and Blue tits,

Bill Dickinson

Reserve Report Sept-Nov

The Reserve really comes to life during August when waders return from their breeding grounds with many thousands choosing to rest here.

The high tide roosts seen from Middle hide produced standing room only, noisy displays. Thousands of Common Redshank jostled for space with Black-tailed Godwits, Dunlin, Greenshank and Spotted Redshank.

On the Ash pool up to 2000 Black-tailed Godwits roosted for most of August and among them several Knot could be picked out.

Those birders who spent time carefully scanning the roosts were rewarded with sightings of rarer passage waders Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper and Little Stint.

Teal were the first ducks to arrive back and large numbers were seen around the tide margins, most still in 'eclipse'. Followed by Wigeon collecting on the salt marsh areas, feeding on the vegetation, and whistling to each other to warn of threatening raptors.

Merlin, Peregrine, Marsh Harrier, Sparrowhawk or Kestrel are daily hazards for our passage and wintering wild birds

Many of you have noticed smaller birds starting to flock in large feeding groups, taking advantage of the berries, haws and the seeds including those of glasswort and aster on the salt marsh. Linnets, Chaffinch, Reed Bunting, Blackbirds, Goldfinch, Greenfinch and Redwings. You should also expect Brambling and Twite to become a regular feature as winter starts to bite.

Sightings:

August- Eleven Great White Egrets, 75 Little Egret, 2 Yellow Legged Gulls, Curlew Sandpiper, Kingfisher, Wheatear, Common Redstart, Sanderling, Ringed Plover, Turnstone, 7 Avocet, Ruddy Shelduck, Hobby, 15 Spotted Redshank and 13 Greenshank, An Arctic Skua frightened all the birds off the Bunded pools. Hundreds of Painted Lady butterflies decorated the reserve during August.

September- Guillemot, Great Skua (found by Stan Skelton), Common Sandpiper, 24 Greenshank, Pink footed Geese, Little Stint, 2 Spoonbill on Flint Sands and Common Snipe.

October - Ruff, Siskin, Grey Wagtail, 5 Bar-tailed Godwit, Goldcrest, Coal Tit, 16 Twite, Pintail, Redwing, and Stonechat. Plus a mega for the reserve a Garganey (found by Dave Winnard).

As we go into November watch out for Fieldfare, Whooper Swans, Brent Geese and if we are really lucky Bewick Swans, Hen Harrier and White Winged gulls.

Sue and Pete Haslem.

Greenfield Valley & Dock 24th Nov

Greenfield Valley stretches almost two miles from the town of Holywell to the dock on the River Dee and is a deep sided valley which was formed during the Ice Age. Copious amount of water running off the nearby hills made it a very attractive site for numerous industries from the 12th century onwards, including: copper, zinc, lead, tin, cotton, flour, paper and wool. The valley was denuded of all its vegetation, but fortunately once all the industries had either declined or moved away, nature reclaimed her inheritance and now it is a wildlife haven with mature woodlands and four major pools connected by a vigorous spring fed stream.

After meeting up we took the short drive down to Greenfield docks for high water. Not a lot showing on the water but we were kept amused by half a dozen Turnstones as they flitted between three large rubber Coastguard dinghies. A walk along the coast gave good views of Redwing, Mistle and Song Thrush in amongst the hawthorn and up to two dozen Pied Wagtail plus the odd Grey Wagtail feeding near the sewage works.

The overhead cables were well populated with Starling with many Crows in the mature trees beyond. Further sighting on the return trip to the cars included Wren, Robin and both male and female Blackbird with fly-bys of Little Egret, Heron, Black Backed and Herring gull.



After a coffee we proceeded into the Vally itself, stopping first at the site of the old Parys Mine Company mill pond. Here were a pair of resident Mute Swans, Moorhen and Kingfisher but alas no sign of the elusive Water Rail!

Continuing up the valley of mature woodland we observed many of the woodland species: Dunnock, Blue and Long Tailed Tit, Tree Creeper and Robin. Surprisingly, throughout the day not one House Sparrow or Chaffinch was seen.

Next stop was the pool for the old flour mill (this was a six storey mill constructed in brick and built in ten weeks!). Here we had Tufted Duck, Mallard and Coot along with a Common gull in amongst a small flock of Black Headed gulls. A Grey Heron and Cormorant were late arrivals



Traversing across to the other side of the valley we proceeded to the site of the old copper mill and its associated mill pond. This pool has been drained to a level to provide a habitat of reed beds. Not a great deal on show here apart from Coots and Little Grebes. A solitary Raven did a flypast before we re-entered the woodland and made our way back towards the cars down the course of the old railway line, which incidentally was one of, if not the, steepest passenger rail line in the country before Mr Beeching had his way.

Many thanks to all who turned out today, sadly no spectacular sightings but 35 species in all, so a good days birding and pleasant company as always.

Alan Smethurst

Committee Members 2020

The AGM was held on the 15th November 2019 and the following members were elected to serve on the committee.

Chairperson:	Phil Hotchkiss
Secretary:	<i>To be appointed</i>
Treasurer:	Bob Lee
Membership Secretary:	Bob Lane
Indoor Meetings:	<i>To be appointed</i>
Outdoor Meetings:	Bill Dickinson
External affairs:	Peter Haslem
Newsletter:	Alan Smethurst
Committee Member:	Dave Colton
Committee Member:	Keith Davies

Contact details for the Committee can be found on our website.

Website editor: Bob Must

And this is what the Reserve is all about



Treasurer's Report 2018/2019

Deeside Naturalists Society Accounts for the year ended 31st October 2019
Registered Charity No. 510146

ACCOUNTING STATEMENT Receipts and payments basis

<u>Income</u>	<u>2018/2019</u>	<u>2017/2018</u>
Bank Interest	29.93	25.03
Donations	421.25	279.00
Subscriptions	5224.00	5113.50
Gift Aid Tax Rebate	1082.76	1040.47
Visits	185.00	46.00
Business Rates refund		434.13
Total Income	<u>6942.94</u>	<u>6958.13</u>
 <u>Expenditure</u>		
Insurance	113.00	113.00
Printing, Photocopying, Stationery, Postage	1422.88	1868.40
Room Hire	150.00	125.00
Refreshments		30.00
Guest Speakers	420.00	339.76
New keys / locks	431.38	355.46
Bird Food	599.55	338.28
FLVC subscription	15.00	15.00
Membership	50.00	
Web Hosting		150.84
Travel		25.00
Equipment	194.54	730.81
Repairs and Maintenance	794.35	6865.64
Visits	40.00	
Books	200.00	
Total Payments	<u>4430.70</u>	<u>10957.10</u>
-Balance for Year	2512.24	-3999.06
Cash funds last year end	14634.28	18586.34
Transfer to/from Key Money	1060.00	65.00
Cash funds this year end	<u>18206.52</u>	<u>14634.28</u>

Bob Lee, Treasurer

Club Corner

DNS PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

The group continues to attract around several members to meetings, which take place on the second Wednesday of each month at 2pm in the Field Study Centre. Typically we look at different aspects of photography and weather permitting we have photography forays around the Reserve. For information on the group please contact Phil Hotchkiss on 07773 333 346

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

WEDNESDAY GROUP

This group meets at the Field Study Centre on the first and the third Wednesday of the month between 1.00 – 3.00 pm. It is an informal gathering of members who usually have lunch and then go for a short ‘walk and talk’ on the reserve, before returning for a final cup of tea. Topics of discussion range from the flora and fauna found on the reserve to local, national and international issues.

Digital Media

PLEASE NOTE: access to the members area of the web site will no longer require a password

Web site: www.deenats.org.uk

Email address: webeditor@deenats.org.uk

Facebook: MEMBERS OF DEESIDE NATURALIST SOCIETY

Don't forget to renew your membership for 2020

MERRY CHRISTMAS