



Welcome to the December edition of the Newsletter. Things have been very much in the air with regard to the Reserve over the past difficult months. This has caused disruption to all our normal scheduled events with a total ban on both indoor talks and outdoor field events. Open day and nest box observations were another casualty of the virus. Our 2020 AGM will be postponed and hopefully rearranged for early April, however, if restrictions are still in place we may have to consider running a virtual AGM by 'Zoom' or something similar.

You will see the Treasurers Report on page 7. Could I ask members to run their eye over them and somebody approve them by email to Bob Lee ([robertlee\\_uk@btinternet.com](mailto:robertlee_uk@btinternet.com)). Thank you.

Just a gentle reminder to anyone who has not renewed their membership for 2020 that it is long overdue but would like to remind you that if you renew now your 2021 membership will be free due to all the disruption we have experienced this year.

As the next Newsletter will not be until April, please watch the DNS website for any information updates.

The Committee would like to extend our seasons greetings to all our members and hopefully we can return to normal before too long

*Alan Smethurst*

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The Reserve is now open again but please remember that the Reserve is in Wales and Welsh Corvid rules will apply on site. At the time of going to print anyone from outside Wales would not be allowed to travel to the Reserve, but this can change from one week to the next as we all well know, please keep an eye on the DNS website for future information.

If we all follow the rules we may have a chance in reducing the infection and getting back to some normality soon. Just remember that the virus doesn't move, people move it. We stop moving – the virus stops moving - the virus dies, its simple

*Phil Hotchkiss (Chair)*

# Parque Natural el Hondo

Jen and I were fortunate enough to spend a few weeks in Spain this autumn and whilst there we visited Parque Natural el Hondo.

El Hondo, situated close to Elche, is the most important fresh and brackish water wetland in Alicante, with 2,387 hectares and is formed by the freshwater irrigation reservoirs of levante and poniente. Around them there are other brackish ponds, as well as salt marsh areas and farmland. There are two sections to the park, one section that is open seven days a week and the smaller North Gate section that is open Saturday mornings only, subject to prior booking.



Flamingo

Walking south from the north gate, we went along a path parallel to the main canal which has a number of walkways that cross to an area of salt marsh. From here we could see the tail of the Poniente reservoir where we saw our first sighting of flamingo, little egret and grey heron. A little further on there was an elevated tower hide that gave a good panoramic view of the reservoir. From this vantage point we had superb views looking towards Sierra de Callosa de Segura and of great crested grebe, black necked grebe, little egret, glossy ibis, shelduck, pintail, shoveler, ruddy shelduck and pochard. Towards the far side of the water there was an osprey perched on a post and a marsh harrier gliding over the reeds. Suddenly flying towards the lake from behind us was a large flock, at least three hundred, of flamingos.



Flamingos

Moving further south we had a large and impressive short toed eagle fly overhead. Cetti's warblers and Sardinian warblers were calling from the reed beds as we walked. The next observation point had a number of waders for us to look at, curlew sandpiper, dunlin, ringed plover, green sandpiper and wood sandpiper together with yellow legged gull and black headed gull. The southernmost hide provided views of black winged stilt, avocet, gadwall, cattle egret and white-headed duck. We could hear the loud noise of purple gallinule in the reed bed but unfortunately they weren't showing today.

We had a fruitful walk back to the car seeing something other than birds, a beautiful tigre butterfly and a crimson speckled footman moth, and the birds were booted eagle, raven, kestrel and fleeting glimpses of fan tailed warbler and Sardinian warbler.



Crimson speckled footman



After lunch we visited the public section of the park that includes an interpretation centre and visitor facilities. Walking towards the visitor centre we saw crested lark, snipe, greenfinch, purple gallinule, which we didn't see earlier that morning, coot, mallard, little egret and common sandpiper. Around the centre there were white-headed duck, the only stiff-tail to occur naturally in Europe and marbled duck, a threatened and declining species. Usually there are a couple of crested coots but none were seen today.



We set out on one of the trails, the first section comprising of a substantial board walk, seeing kingfisher, little grebe and black-necked grebe. The first hide that we came to was overlooking a large body of water that held gadwall, cormorant, yellow-legged and black-headed gull, flamingo, red-crested and common pochard.



Our last and final hide was a bit of a surprise, it is normally a reed-encircled shallow pool but because of the lack of rainfall in the area we were looking at a very muddy scene, not that there was any reason to complain; black-winged stilt, little stint, greenshank, curlew sandpiper, avocet, lapwing, ringed plover, shelduck all of which were put up into the sky by a low-flying marsh harrier.

On our way back to the visitor centre we encountered white wagtail, meadow pipit, fantail warbler and more crested larks.

If you are ever out in the Alicante region turn your back on the beach and head to el Hondo.

*Bill Dickinson*



# Poland 2017/18 & 20 (with Marek Borkowski and Hania)

We began our trips either from Warsaw or Krakow and our first in 2017 began in the main square of Warsaw overlooking Sigamund's column from our Hotel, the House of Literature. Most of Warsaw has been reconstructed beautifully - as it used to look - after the devastation of WW2.

In Spring in May/June we were off with Marek and our new friends Wilf, David and Norma to the Masurian Lakes and at the largest, twice the size of Loch Lomond, Lake Sniardwy where we settled in to our Hotel, the "Polish Academy of Science". Then next day to Biebrza Marsh.

Up at 4.30 am, Marek doesn't waste time on these trips, to see a male Capercaillie as well as Crested tits and Black Woodpecker, a glimpse of a Red Breasted Flycatcher, Wryneck, Yellowhammer, Hobby, Fox, Elk and Hare as well as hearing a Cuckoo and Fire-bellied Toads. In the evening on the Marsh we saw Great Snipe bouncing up and down while we were eaten alive by mossies. The calling Quail, Mole Crickets and Corncrake helped to finish an amazing day - by midnight.

Next morning at Marek's home in the Biebrza Marsh along with many birds like this Wryneck where we enjoyed breakfast overlooked by many birds - and a red Squirrel. A lake visit rewarded us with Black-winged, White-winged, Black and Whiskered Terns

May29th we had a wonderful trip to a rare fen mire rich in sedges with great views of the rare Aquatic Warbler. Later we had wonderful views of orchids including the Lady's Slipper and the Early Marsh while we with the Polish botanist Cezary Werpacholski.

Back on Biebrza Marsh on the 30th May we saw some of the loveliest birds we have ever seen. 5 to 8am - Male Rosefinch, osprey, crested tit, nutcracker. Lunchtime - Golden oriole. On the lake we saw Black necked, Red necked, Great crested and Little grebes, Tufted duck, Great Reed Warbler, female Bearded Tit and Penduline Tit at nest. Heard bittern and Little crake. The bluethroat photo↓ doesn't quite do it justice, likewise the penduline tit.

Next day may be the last anyone could enjoy the Bialowieza Forest as much as we did. Of course we came again - and it was great - BUT we could see - and we have been told - that it's days are numbered. The Polish authorities don't like dead trees in the forest, the trees that give homes to 10 species of woodpeckers!

We now go to Bialowiezaforest on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> Mayafter a luxurious night on the Tzar's train. This is not the Tzar's train but where we had a bit of fun - like Norma, up and down the special track.

Here on the Polish Belarussian border after a 4.45 am startwe viewed our first sighting of a Pygmy owl. We also saw Tengmalms owl and eight species of woodpecker!

This forest of live and dead trees with all its many animals and birds may soon not exist in its present form "all these dead trees are a waste"!!! Polish politics! No pride in having amongst the oldest (some 400 and 500 years old) trees in the world

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Great grey owl

2<sup>nd</sup> June – to the lakes near the Ukrainian border. After looking for collared Flycatcher and grey-headed Woodpecker and more Rosefinch we say goodbye to Wilf and Nora – and on to the Tatra mountains.

We see 5 young Bearded Tits and a Great Reed Warbler. Hania searches nearly ALL NIGHT for a Great Grey Owl for us to see. More birds next day, I won't make you envious by naming them and lovely Armenian coloured houses at Zamose, a UNESCO site. More birds and Roe deer and fox. On Sunday the 4<sup>th</sup> of June we get to the top of the Tatra Mountains via a scenic lift where Bob saw a sub adult Golden Eagle -and we all saw Water Pipit on the roof, then Alpine Accentor, Wheatear, Chamois and Marmot. Wonderful mountain views – Marek has watched bears from our viewpoint previously.

Alpine Accentor and Narcissus anemones after a sumptuous breakfast in the beautiful Tatra Mountains

Up next day at 4.15 to walk up a valley in search of Wall Creepers. Hania had seen one so now we searched the area for it – and yes, we did see it AND we got a 'photo' – but you would need a good imagination to recognize it! Next day we looked at – trains! Well, even I found them interesting – there was a train that had been used for the Shindler's List film.

Up at 4am next morning to have another go at Wall Creepers. We climbed up some mountain fixed ladders to get the best view – but still only minute although we did get some views!

Not quite the end. In 2018 we returned to Poland at the end of Jan/beginning of Feb for excellent sightings of Beavers and – for Bob anyway – wolves. We all had good views of a young lynx and enjoyed tracking one. We nipped across the border into Belarus for excellent views of Great Grey Owl.



Bluethroat



Penduline tit

This year, Sep/Oct the highlights were, for me, the best views I've had of 3 Hen Harriers squabbling for ages! And the company of Emily, Gill, Colin and Abi working in or near the Northumberland National Park. The amazing Bialowieza Forest National Park, which is the largest and oldest forest in Europe, is now being destroyed, sorry I mean cleared of all those useless dead trees. We can't complain – What happened to our trees?

*Betty Lee*

# Reserve Report

A fragmented bird report owing to the reserve being closed five months from April. Fortunately we were able to count during the key months, for passage waders and arrival of wintering ducks.

## *Sightings:*

**February:** 110 Stock Doves, 45 Snipe, 8 Gadwall, 25 Twite and a Common Sandpiper. A ringed Shelduck was identified as one tagged in the Derwent valley and recorded for the first time since 2011. Twite.

**March:** Greenland White fronted goose (SH), 6 Pale bellied Brent geese, 4 Red legged partridge, 24 Whooper Swans with 23 Mute Swans, 5 Chiffchaff and a Wheatear.

**July:** Female Redstart, 850 Black-tailed Godwit (many in breeding plumage).

**August:** 12 Spotted Redshank, 15 Greenshank, 10 Great Egrets, 4 Sparrow hawks, 6 Kestrels perched together (suggesting a local breeding), Green Sandpiper (SS), Turnstone, Ruff, Ringed Plover, Goosander. Cuckoo (landed next to car window), 6 Sanderling, 9 Common Sandpiper, 2500 Black-tailed Godwit, 46 Little Egret, Yellow-legged Gull (PH), Ruddy Shelduck, 10 Whimbrel, Knot, 2000 Redshank, Lesser Whitethroat, Common Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, 6 Chiffchaff, Bar-tailed Godwit, Whinchat and 2 Wheatear. Spotted Redshank.



**September:** 22 Greenshank, 200 Knot, 2 Kingfisher, Curlew Sandpiper, 6 Avocet, Ruddy Shelduck, 2000 Shelduck, 400 Teal, 22 Spotted Redshank, 2 Peregrine, 62 Little Egret, 3000 Redshank, 1000 Teal, 2500 Black-tailed Godwit and 1000s Pink-footed geese. Curlew Sandpiper.

**October:** 2 Stonechat, Wheatear, 2500 Black-tailed Godwit, 2000 fly over Pink-footed geese with a further 1000 on river bank, 26 Redwing, 2 Fieldfare, 13 Spotted Redshank, 16 Greenshank, 1000 Dunlin, 20 Skylark, 60 Linnet, 5 Twite, 34 Snipe and 9 Grey plover. Black-tailed Godwit.

**November.** 2800 Black-tailed Godwit, 300 Knot, 800 Wigeon, Kingfisher, Pintail, Shoveler, Gadwall, 500 Teal, 1000 Dunlin, 5 Spotted Redshank and 4 Greenshank.

*Peter and Sue Haslem.*

# Treasurer's Report 2019/2020

Deeside Naturalists Society Accounts for the year ended 31st October 2020  
Registered Charity No. 510146

## ACCOUNTING STATEMENT Receipts and payments basis

<u>Income</u>	<u>2019/2020</u>	<u>2018/2019</u>
Bank Interest	18.88	29.93
Donations	1765.00	421.25
Subscriptions	4942.00	5224.00
Gift Aid Tax Rebate	903.35	1082.76
Visits	185.00	185.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b><u>7695.23</u></b>	<b><u>6942.94</u></b>
 <u>Expenditure</u>		
Insurance	113.00	113.00
Printing, Photocopying, Stationery, Postage	902.31	1422.88
Room Hire	100.00	150.00
Guest Speakers	110.00	420.00
New keys / locks	797.53	431.38
Bird Food	302.78	599.55
FLVC subscription		15.00
Membership	50.00	50.00
Web Hosting	15.09	
Travel	30.00	
Equipment		194.54
Repairs and Maintenance	1484.0	794.35
Visits	20.00	40.00
Books	10.20	200.00
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b><u>3934.91</u></b>	<b><u>4430.70</u></b>
<b>Balance for Year</b>	<b>3760.32</b>	<b>2512.24</b>
Cash funds last year end	18206.52	1434.28
Transfer to/from Key Money	430.00	1060.00
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b><u>22396.84</u></b>	<b><u>18206.52</u></b>

*Bob Lee, Treasurer*

# Committee Members 2021

The last AGM was held on the 13th November 2020 and the following members were elected to serve on the committee. With the situation as it is regarding the Covid 19 virus we cannot say at this moment when or indeed how we will hold an AGM (which is a legal obligation before April 2021) for the election of officers for 2021 . Please consult the DNS website for any updates or notifications.

Chairperson:	Phil Hotchkiss
Secretary:	Ian Spence
Treasurer:	Bob Lee
Membership Secretary:	John Briggs
Indoor Meetings:	<i>To be appointed</i>
Outdoor Meetings:	Bill Dickinson
Website:	Bob Must
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*

## Digital Media

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

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

Facebook: MEMBERS OF DEESIDE NATURALIST SOCIETY

*MERRY CHRISTMAS*