

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This will be my last Chairman's report as I am stepping down at the forthcoming AGM. I have been (Chair) since 2011/12 with a brief spell out in 2018 so I think I have done my bit, so if anyone would like to take over, please let a committee member know and you could have your say on what goes on at the reserve.

During my time in the position, I once introduced Iolo Williams as Chris Packham at the 40th anniversary at Connah's Quay civic hall, he saw the funny side.

We have seen the windows being changed from the old dropdown wooden flaps that scared all the birds off when opened to dropdown glass, a big improvement especially in the winter months.

Things in the pipeline: the reinstatement of the out-fall pipe on the pools. This was due to be carried out next autumn but since Uniper has changed hands from Fortum to the German government the funding that was in place has been lost. Uniper is still keen for the work to go ahead and is looking into the funding of this project.

Work on the Lead Brook that runs down from the railway line past the West hide is being cleared and widened under a "notice for flood relief order." This is due to be carried out before the winter rains.

Members are reminded about the conditions of membership, (1) that they observe the rules when on site, particularly the speed limit of 15mph. (2) that no reporting of bird sighting on other birding platforms. The reason for this is that a few years ago someone put up a sighting and the access road was blocked with non-members parking at will and entering the Reserve. If this continues Uniper will close the site and we would all lose out.

I might remind you that the site is monitored with CCTV by Uniper and as our landlords notify us of any infringements and security concerns.

I would like to wish you all a Happy Christmas.

Phil Hotchkiss (Chair)

Many thanks to our Membership Secretary, John Briggs for the many hours he has spent on the research and implementation of our new online membership renewal system, details of which can be found on page 6.

One matter arising from the AGM held at the Field Centre on November 15th is that there is a vacancy for a committee member. If you feel you can contribute to the smooth running of the Reserve and would like to put yourself forward, please contact the Deenats Secretary on: secretary@deenats.org.uk

I must report that of one our longstanding members, Roger Riley sadly passed away in mid-November. He will be missed by friends both here at DNS and Big Pool Wood.

Alan Smethurst

Frodsham / Weaver bend - 27th Aug

Frodsham marshes at the confluence of the River Weaver, Manchester Ship Canal, and the Mersey estuary, was an excellent area of sludge-beds but unfortunately many are dry with only number six bed holding water, however they still attract a wide range of both breeding and wintering birds, with a fair selection of rarities. The embankments afford good views of the massed ranks of waders and duck on the Mersey estuary.

Fourteen members met on the motorway bridge above the M56, decanting into four cars as we headed to our first stop, Number six bed. We saw from a distance that there were many waders on the western edge of the shore. Most of the waders were black tailed godwits circa 2,500, other waders included ruff, redshanks, and lapwings, sharing that stretch of shoreline were a few wagtails; pied and yellow. On the water were Canada geese, shovelers, mallard, teal, tufted ducks, and little grebes.

As we walked along the track above the lagoon we noticed a buzzard sat in the top of a bush being annoyed by a magpie that didn't seem impressed at sharing the bush with a buzzard. Also noticeable was the number of goldfinches that were flying from areas of thistle to bushes and back again.



From the lagoon we got back into the cars to drive to Marsh Farm which is on the bank of the Manchester Ship Canal, on the approach there was a small van blocking the single-track lane, on getting out of the car to see what the problem was the driver pointed to a raptor in the sky, an osprey. We all immediately piled out of the cars and spent the next five minutes watching this amazing raptor as it circled above us until it drifted south. What a delight. We continued our journey to the canal bank from where we were able to overlook the Mersey Estuary which gave us distant views of curlew, shelduck, great crested grebes, cormorants and gulls including great black backed, lesser black backed, herring and black headed.

Lunch was calling so we returned to the parked cars before driving through Frodsham to the parking area for the Weaver Bend. On the bank of the bend we settled down for lunch and a more relaxed time of watching what was about. Along the far bank of the river were redshank, black tailed godwits, ruff and snipe, on the sandbank there were Canada, greylag and barnacle geese, a couple of common gulls amongst the black headed gulls together with dunlin and black tailed godwits.

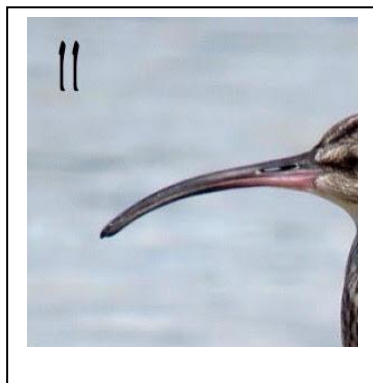
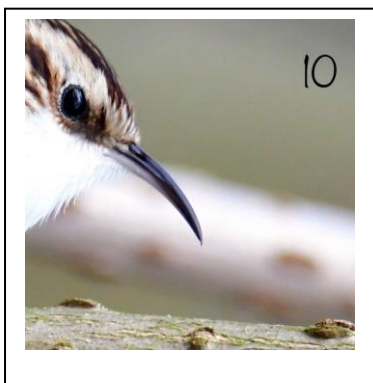
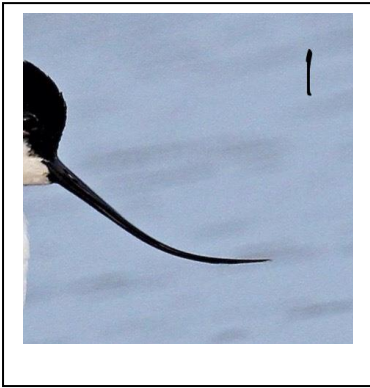
Suddenly the waders took to the air and it wasn't too long before the culprit was spotted, right above us was the osprey circling. Whilst we watched, it made an attempt to take a fish from the river but was unsuccessful but it didn't give up, it circled around again hit the water and when it was airborne we could see a fish grasped in its talons. We were delighted to see it earlier high above us but to watch it fish right in front of us, well birding just does not get any better!



A big thank you to the members who turned out for what was a very remarkable and unforgettable days birding, we had forty plus birds on the day.

Bill Dickinson

Beak Identification Quiz



Committee Members 2023

Chairperson	Keith Davies
Secretary	Ian Spence
Treasurer	Bob Lee
Membership Secretary	John Briggs
Bird Recorder	Peter Haslem
Field trips	Bill Dickinson
Newsletter	Alan Smethurst
Committee member	David Colton
Committee member	to be appointed

Contact details are on the Deenats website: deenats.org.uk

Badgers (*Meles meles*)

Badgers are mammals measuring between 70cm and 100cm with a body weight of 8-9kg in the spring, increasing to 11-12kg in the autumn. Life expectancy is a maximum of around 14 years but is generally a lot less. Currently in the UK they number between 250,000 and 400,000.

Badgers are nocturnal and are rarely seen in the day when they will lie up. When not active, badgers will lie up in an extensive system of underground tunnels and nesting chambers – a sett. There will be a main sett where most of the group live but there will normally be outlying holes around the territory which are used on occasions. Badger groups (clans) are on average around half a dozen in number but can vary from just a couple to well into double figures. They generally control a territory of around 30 hectares and mark their boundaries with a series of latrines which are used communally and are left uncovered.

Mating can take place between throughout the year, but the females will delay implantation of the fertilised eggs until late winter. Cub litters are usually 2 or 3 and are born around February. They are born blind and naked and will not show above ground for a couple of months when their favourite food, earthworms are in abundance. Come late summer they will be feeding independently outside the sett.

Around and About- Bickerton Hill



Bickerton Hill is a lowland heath sitting atop a sandstone outcrop lying at the centre of a triangle of towns, Chester, Nantwich and Whitchurch. The main area for parking is at (SJ503531) but there is a disabled car park for 3 vehicles at (SJ502526) which eliminates much of the ascent by foot. Some 200 metres from the disabled car park is a nicely positioned hide on the edge of an area of grazing overlooking the heath.

The first area of Bickerton Hill was gifted to the National Trust in 1982, then the remaining area in 1991. It is an excellent example of rare lowland heath. Lowland heath is extremely rare in the UK (and worldwide). The hill is made up of a sandstone outcrop, covers an area of 91 hectares and is a designated Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI). Following the Second World War the decrease in grazing and the use of the area for military training meant that the self-seeding birch were taking the heath over to the detriment of natural heathland vegetation such as heather and bilberry by depriving it of light. Great strides have been made to reverse this situation by the removal of young self-seeded birch to encourage the growth of the heath vegetation. This however encourages the growth of bracken, so a carefully managed and balanced programme including clearing and grazing by ponies sheep and traditional hardy Galloway cattle has been instigated.



This undertaking thins out the canopy allowing the heath vegetation to slowly recover back to previous levels. The return of the habitat will see the return of the wildlife like Adder, Common lizard, green Hairstreak butterfly, Nightjars, Corncrakes and numerous other species on the “red data” list. Regular spring visitors are Cuckoo and Ring Ouzel.

Online Membership Renewal

We are now using an online system for membership applications and renewals provided by Membermojo.

Those members who we do not hold an email address for should have received a paper renewal application form with this Newsletter, please complete and return this to the membership secretary and your membership cards will be posted to you.

The online system is available at any time enabling members to update their address, email, gift aid and contact preferences.

We are now set up to receive payments by Credit or Debit card. We can only accept this payment method for online applications and renewals.

Accessing the online membership system for renewals. Updating your details – use the same sign in and sign out procedure and click edit in the summary details.

Access is either by typing <https://membermojo.co.uk/Deenats> into your browser

Or - Going to the Society's web site deenats.org.uk, Then go to the join us page and then clicking on the Membership Application Button.

You will end up on the same screen

- Click the Sign in button in the top right corner
 - Choose sign in without a password
 - Enter your email address, click Sign in with email, you should then receive an email giving access to your membership record. If the email isn't recognised, please email the membership secretary quoting your membership number so a check can be made in the records to ensure we have the correct email for you.
 - Click the review actions button and/or
 - Click the renew button
 - Check the details for your membership confirming address, contact preferences and gift aid preference. Click Next
 - If you have family membership, please add the name and email of the other family member. The membership number is the same as the first member. The email can be the same or different to the first member. The whole section can be left blank if required. Click Next.
 - Confirm the details then Click Checkout
 - Choose payment method. Details of where to send Cheques and Bacs payments are given. If paying by Credit or With Debit card complete the required details.
 - If you pay by Credit or With Debit card you will receive an email giving a receipt and a PDF copy of your membership card for you to print or store on your device.
 - If you pay by cheque or Bank transfer, you will receive an email giving details of how to pay. Your receipt and a pdf copy of your membership card for you to print or store on your device will be sent when we receive your payment.
- You have now successfully renewed your membership. To log off click on the square in the top right corner with your name or initial and then sign out. The Membermojo screen will default to the Deenats website.

John Briggs

Reserve Bird Report Aug-Nov

Summer fading into autumn produces a crossover of migrating species. Warblers, Terns and Swallows change places with returning Redshanks, Teal and Pink-footed geese. Among these keenly anticipated returnees we were lucky to get some real reserve rarities. Thank you to keen eyed members for the following records: **Leach's petrel** (Sue Haslem), **Eider duck** (Stan Skelton), **Slavonian grebe** and **Great northern diver** (Geoff Robinson).
Sightings.

July. Spoonbill, Mediterranean gull, 11 Sandwich terns, 85 Common terns, Whimbrel, Knot, Water rail, **Pochard**, Sanderling, Ringed plover.

August. Snipe. Common redstart, Wheatear, Red kite, 23 Stock dove, 4 Spoonbill, Whinchat, Marsh harrier, Little stint, 82 Little egret, Ruff, **Arctic skua**, Bar-tailed godwit, 1200 Black-tailed godwit, Pintail, 16 Great egret, Curlew sandpiper, 30 Greenshank, 16 Spotted redshank.

September. 3 Curlew sandpiper, 15 Bar-tailed godwit, 220 Pintail increasing to 3000 by month end, Wigeon, 43 Greenshank, Osprey, 4 Ruff, Egyptian goose, 3500 Redshank, Wheatear, 2 Peregrine, 28 Spotted Redshank, Little stint, Avocet, Kingfisher, Common scoter, Stonechat, Swallows, House martins, 200 Goldfinch, Cetti's warbler, **Leach's petrel**, 1000 Teal, Guillemot, Golden plover, Merlin.

October. Chiffchaff, 4 Curlew sandpiper, Egyptian goose, Wheatear, Common sandpiper, 50 Meadow pipit, 40 Redwing, Skylark, 3 Grey wagtail, Fieldfare, **Slavonian grebe**, Golden eye, Rock pipit, Swallow, 1000 Starling, 2 Kingfisher, 10 Reed bunting, 3000 Dunlin, 4000 Black-tailed godwit, 1000 Lapwing, Pink-footed geese.

November. Stonechat, 2 Merlin, 20 Redwing, Goosander, **Great northern diver**, Marsh harrier, Barnacle geese, 6 Ruddy shelduck, Avocet, Turnstone.

As winter bites look out for the following: Whooper swans, Short eared owl, Merlin, Hen harrier, Twite, White winged gulls and rarer geese. Be lucky!



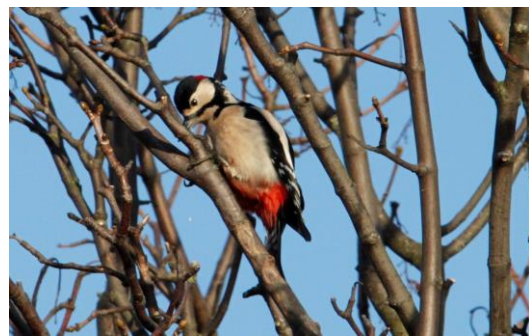
Leaches Petrel (PH)

Sue & Pete Haslem

Point of Ayr & Big pool wood – 16th Oct

We met in the car park at Talacre - totally alien to our programme for the day in as much as we were surrounded by gift shops, arcades, pubs and cafes! Fortunately, within a hundred metres or so we were out on the sea defences making our way out towards the RSPB viewing screen which is situated at the marsh edge of the Dee estuary as it opens out into Liverpool Bay. Unfortunately, due to mis reading of the tide tables we were 5 hours ahead of high water, meaning many of the waders were still far out on the estuary. We were treated to a pair of Great Spotted Woodpeckers cavorting in the upper branches of the nearby trees. Little was present on the immediate marsh apart from a fair number of skylark and meadow pipets plus several solitary Redshank.

From the viewing screen there were distant views of Shelduck, Oyster Catcher, Redshank, Teal, Pied Wagtail and both Black Headed and Herring gull. Retracing our steps back to the cars we stopped for a while to try for the Kingfisher at its local haunt, but with no luck.



Big Pool Wood, a North Wales Wildlife Trust reserve covers an area of around 4 hectares and is made up of a reedbed and pool surrounded by deciduous wet woodland. There are three hides, two overlooking the pools/reedbeds and the other looking out into the woodland clearing. It was now our second disappointment of the day in as much as the pools were not much more than mud pools due to the prolonged hot weather we have experienced this past summer. Nonetheless we had good views of numerous woodland birds – Coal, Blue and Great Tit, Wren, Goldfinch, Dunnock, Robin and Jay plus an overhead Buzzard being relentlessly mobbed by half a dozen crows. We encountered an extraordinary number of Alder beetles around the pool perimeter. On arrival back to the cars we were treated to a flypast by a sparrowhawk, which then came back over for a second circuit.



All in all, a day that could have been kinder to us but plenty of good birding and a beautiful sunny autumnal day with really good company. Thanks to all who turned out.

Alan Smethurst

Malltraeth & Cors Ddyga – 12th Nov

The meeting was at the two locations as above, the morning on the Malltraeth Cob and the afternoon at the RSBP's nature reserve Cors Ddyga. We met in the woodland car park southwest of the Cob, a couple of members stopped at the nearby car park and were rewarded with a view of two red squirrels.



We started walking towards Malltraeth as the tide was coming in and, on the edge of the marsh we saw our first bird of prey, a peregrine falcon. On the sea were rafts of shelduck, wigeon, pintail and teal, in the shallower water were black tailed godwit and redshank, gulls included common, black headed, herring and great black backed. On Malltraeth Pool there were only a few mallards, teal and a couple of little grebes. Along the tarmac path we were treated to views of stonechats, greenfinch, goldfinches and reed buntings.

On returning to the cars, we had lunch before heading off to the afternoon's venue, Cors Ddyga. I had been to the car park earlier that day and had seen redwing, bullfinch and kingfisher, none of which were seen in the afternoon. The water level was high but there were still teal, wigeon, shoveler, mute swans with the odd snipe to be seen, not many geese were about except for a few greylags and Canadas. On the marshy areas we saw cormorant, grey herons and little egrets.



A wisp, possibly twenty, snipe flew across the footpath but soon disappeared into the marsh. I mentioned the earlier peregrine as our first bird of prey we also saw kestrel, sparrowhawk, buzzard four marsh harriers and a red kite over Llangefni. One of the last birds to be seen was a great egret dropping into the marsh for its evening roost.

That was the last of my field meetings for 2022 so I would like to thank all the members that have joined me throughout the year and look forward to seeing you in 2023. Have a Happy New Year.

Bill Dickinson

Field Events 2023

Tuesday 24th JANUARY, SEAFORTH. Nestled in the heart of the Liverpool Docks at the mouth of the Mersey, Seaforth, is a major roosting site for a spectacular variety of waders, seabirds, ducks, and small birds. Limited numbers, advance booking is necessary. Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Tuesday 21st FEBRUARY, PARKGATE. High tide watch as the incoming tide forces the birds into viewing range. Meet at the Old Baths Car Park at 9.30am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Saturday 25th MARCH, LLANFAIRFECHAN AND THE SPINNIES. for winter seabirds and waders. Meet in the beach car park by the Pavilion Cafe, off junction 15, A55 at 9.00am. Contact Alan Smethurst 07896758222 for more details.

Wednesday 19th APRIL, MINERA AND CLYWED 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 for more details

Saturday 13th MAY, YNYS HIR RSPB AND CORS DYFI. estuary, woodland birds and osprey. Bring RSPB membership cards. Meet in Ynys Hir car park, off A487 at 10.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Saturday 10th JUNE, ELLESMERE AND COLEMERE. Excellent variety of habitat and wildlife. Meet at the Visitor Centre Ellesmere at 10.30am. Contact Keith Davies 01978760353 for more details.

Thursday 6th JULY, SOUTH STACK RSPB and CEMLYN BAY. spectacular nesting seabird extravaganza. Bring RSPB membership cards. Meet in the café car park at 9.30am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Sunday 20th AUGUST, RHYDYMWYN AND COED Y FELIN, woodland birds. Meet at 10.00am in the car park, Nant Alyn Rd off the A 541. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Saturday 16th SEPTEMBER, NORTH WALES COAST. A day's birding along the North Wales coast looking at migrating birds. Meet on DNS Reserve approach, Kelsterton Rd. 9.00am Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Tuesday 17th OCTOBER, CONWAY RSPB. and estuary. Bring RSPB membership cards. Meet at Conway reserve car park at 9.30am. Contact Alan Smethurst 07896758222 for more details.

Saturday 11th NOVEMBER, RIVER CLWYD. The stretch of the tidal River Clwyd between Rhyl and Rhuddlan provides good birdwatching, with close views of mudflats and river channel from either bank. Meet at the Rhyl Harbour car park, Horton Nose Lane, 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson on 07968438121

Saturday 9th DECEMBER, DEE MARSHES. a walk out onto the marsh, birds and a beer. Meet Little Neston Old Quay, just after the Harp public house, at 9.00am. Bring wellingtons. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Please car share where possible. Notices will be put on DNS Facebook page and the DNS website prior to the meetings

Bill Dickinson

DNS account statement 2021/2022

Deeside Naturalists Society Accounts for the year ended 31st October 2022 Registered Charity No. 510146

ACCOUNTING STATEMENT Receipts and payments basis

<u>Income</u>	<u>2021/2022</u>	<u>2020/2021</u>
Bank Interest	6.53	1.52
Donations	298.00	92.18
Subscriptions	4986.00	840.00
Gift Aid Tax Rebate	894.02	136.20
Visits	59.10	
Total Income	<u>6243.65</u>	<u>1069.90</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>2021-2022</u>	<u>2020-2021</u>
Insurance	113.28	102.20
Printing	938.00	558.00
Postage	1017.60	667.22
Stationery	113.91	49.31
New keys / locks	292.49	240.00
Bird Food	883.40	555.57
WOS membership	50.00	50.00
Web Hosting	0.00	388.46
Travel	10.00	0.00
Equipment	35.94	0.00
Repairs & Maintenance	65.83	2836.00
New Membership Account	140.00	0.00
AGM	49.00	19.00
Books		25.00
Total Payments	<u>3710.45</u>	<u>5490.76</u>
Balance for Year	2533.20	-4420.86
Cash funds last year end	22319.90	22325.76
Transfer from Key Deposit Money	418.00	295.00
Cash funds this year end	<u>25271.10</u>	<u>18199.90</u>

Bob Lee, Treasurer

Beak Identification Quiz - answers

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| 1. AVOCET | 2. DUNNOCK |
| 3. DUNLIN | 4. MERGANSER |
| 5. HERON | 6. OYSTERCATCHER |
| 7. SNIPE | 8. KESTREL |
| 9. TWITE | 10. TREECREEPER |
| 11. WHIMBREL | 12. GIANT SQUID !!! |

Club Corner

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

Web site: www.deenats.org.uk

Email address: webeditor@deenats.org.uk

Facebook: MEMBERS OF DEESIDE NATURALIST SOCIETY