

Newsletter



Issue 142

January 2017

Registered Charity No. 510146

Deeside Naturalists' Society

Welcome to the January edition of the Newsletter. A heartfelt thank you to two of our committee members, Damien Brady, Programme Secretary (indoor meetings) and Joan Hotchkiss who both stood down at the December AGM. Your hard work has been very much appreciated and has contributed greatly to the smooth running of our Society.

I would like to extend a welcome to Pete and Sue Haslam who have both been elected onto the Committee.

Please note the membership renewal form can be found on the last page of this Newsletter. The form should be returned to the Membership Secretary by the end of January 2017. For those who would rather not cut the form from the Newsletter it can be downloaded from the website. From the Home Page select 'About Us' then 'Join Us', you will then see a link to the membership renewal at the foot of the page.

At the December AGM an amendment to the Constitution was voted on and accepted as follows:

If membership of the Society is not renewed within 13 months of the date of expiry, the key deposit monies will be forfeited and incorporated into the Society's funds. Keys returned within 13 months will have their deposit refunded.

Thank you to Keith Shannon for his piece on Nightingales. Any articles you would like to share with our members in the Newsletter are always welcome, or if you have any photo/optical equipment you are looking to sell feel free to circulate it to the rest of the membership here.

There have been some complaints written on the white boards about rubbish in the hides. I would point out there is a brush and pan in each of the hides and it takes no longer to pick up the brush than to compose a narrative for the notice board. We all need to do our bit to keep the Reserve tidy - there is no 'dust fairy' who appears overnight.

May I wish the Season's Greetings to each and every one of you.

Alan Smethurst

Chairman's Report

It's That time of the year again and I would like to offer my Seasonal Greetings you all, especially to our new members.

Members may have noticed the cutting down and clearing of the copse under the pylon to the right of the rundown from the barrier. Neither Uniper nor ourselves had anything to do with this decision it was solely National Grid. They could have just topped it but that would have meant repeating the operation again next year so the decision was made to chop it down so it should be some 5 years before the need to do it again.

As mentioned last year we have now taken delivery of two new benches that are rot and UV resistant so should last for a long time. they are sited at the top of the car park by the West hide and by the Dee hide.

I would like to thank Roger for providing some colour to the hides with some photos of wildlife seen on the Reserve.

Last year it was mentioned about looking into providing screening on the Reserve road and I would like to hear from anyone with ideas and cost of providing screening from the sluice gate towards the Dee hide. This has been on the agenda for some time and I think it is time we looked further into it.

This year we have had a good few group visits with excellent feedbacks and we had some new members joining from those groups. On one group visit we had the kingfisher at the start by the Field Centre and it followed them to the West hide for more views and some good photographs. Look on their website on:
www.10x50.com/latest.htm

One of the supporting posts on the West hide screening had become loose due to the storms early in the year, we have now re-concreted the post and installed two bracing posts. Next year the screening at the West hide and the Field Centre will need re-spraying so any volunteers to help would be greatly appreciated.

This year we have had a variety of different topics covered at the indoor meetings that have been well attended and I would to thank Damien for all his work in putting the programme together.

This year Joan is stepping down from the Committee after around 6 years of picking up litter on the Reserve, collating the signing in sheets and doing the teas for the Friday evening talks and I would like to pass on our thanks.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Please remember to send in your membership renewal early, not forgetting a SSAE

Phil Hotchkiss

Indoor Meetings 2017

All indoor meetings (**except the October meeting**) will be held at Connah's Quay Community Centre, Tuscan Way, off Chapel Street, CH5 4DZ and will start at 7.30pm.

Friday 20th January, Lorna Jenner.

The Development of Connah's Quay dock.

Friday 17th February, Mandy Cartwright.

Amphibians and Reptiles in North Wales.

Friday 17th March, Suzanne Iuppa,

The work of the Vincent Wildlife Trust - including the Pine Marten recovery project.

Friday 15th September.

TO BE ARRANGED

Friday 20th October, Mike Taylor, Wepre Park Ranger.

A talk on the work and wildlife of Wepre Park including specimens and exhibits.
will be held at the new Field Centre, Wepre Park)

(NB: This talk

Friday 17th November, Paul Furnborough.

Bird ringing at Connah's Quay Nature Reserve.

Friday 24th November.

AGM

Damien Brady

Quiz

Question 1

Explain how a beehive can change into a rotten spud in four easy stages ?

Question 2

Explain how blotting paper can change into a lazy dog in three easy stages ?

Field Meetings 2017

For all trips members will meet at the times stated for each trip at venue. It is possible that car sharing arrangements can be organised via the trip contact.

Sunday 19th February.

Denhall Lane & RSPB Burton Mere wetlands. Marshland birds and more. Meet at denhall lane, Burton, Cheshire (SJ303749) at 9.30am. Please bring RSPB membership card. For further details contact: Alan Smethurst: 07896758222

Saturday 1st April.

Conwy Valley and Spinnies Hawfinches and waders. meet at Caerhun Church, Conwy (SH774706) at 9.30am. For further details contact: Bill Dickinson: 07968438121.

Sunday 23rd April.

Leasowe Foreshore. Waders, seabirds and migrants. Meet at Leasowe Lighthouse car park, Moreton, Wirral (SJ270914) at 9.30am. For further details contact: Bill Dickinson: 07968438121.

Sunday 28th May.

Wixhall Moss. Raise bog SSSI with rare fauna and flora. Maybe a Hobby? Meet at Manor House, Moss Lane, Whixall (SJ505365) at 12.00pm. For further details contact: Alan Smethurst: 07896758222

Thursday 15th June.

Llandegla Forest. Nightjars. EVENING MEETING 8.00pm at Llandegla Forest visitors centre (SJ240524) For further details contact: Bob Lane: 07985704963 / 01352 770663

Saturday 24th June.

South Stack RSPB and Cemlyn Bay. Spectacular nesting seabird extravaganza. Meet at Llanfairfechan (SH678755) at the Waterfront Cafe at 9.00am. For further details contact: Betty Lee on 01244 550993

Saturday 9th September.

Hilbre Island. Hilbre over high tide - Waders Terns and Skuas. Meet at West Kirby Sailing Centre, Dee Lane (SJ213869) at 9.30am for immediate crossing. For further details contact: Bill Dickinson: 07968438121

Sunday 22nd October.

Moore Nature Reserve. Popular reserve with lakes, woods and pastures, also the possibility of lesser Spotted Woodpecker. Meet at Moore NR, Lapwing Lane, Warrington (SJ573854) at 9.30am. For further details contact: Hugh Stewart: 07527828571

Saturday 16th December.

Marshside RSPB and Mere Sands Wood LWT. Bewick and Whooper Swans with a host of other wildfowl and waders. Meet at Marshside visitor centre (SD353205) at 9.30am. For further details contact: Bill Dickinson: 07968438121.

Bill Dickinson

Reserve Report Oct-Dec

The best spectacle on the Reserve this autumn was probably the **Great White Egret** that came to feed in front of the Middle Hide for just a few days from November 12th enabling some nice photographs. They are often seen across the river at high tide (with the aid of a telescope!) and occasionally cross to Oakenholt Marsh (as one did on September 21st), but this was the first time that several members were able to have such close views. The presence of up to 12 of them across the river at Burton Marsh undoubtedly increased the chances of getting them on the Reserve.



Great White Egret, with Little Egret in background. *Photo: G.E.Morris*



Great Skua on the fly ash lagoon
Photo: Peter and Sue Haslem



Twite (two with rings between car park and fly ash lagoon).
Photo: G.E.Morris

A flock of 27 Barnacle Geese visited the Reserve a few times from September and reached 40 by December 4th. The Pink-footed Geese that first appeared, on and off in early November, reached 2,300 on Oakenholt Marsh on December 7th. The Highest count so far of our regular Canada Goose flock was 1,900 on September 15th.

Brief visits by Avocet, Curlew, Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Ruff, Grey Plover, Turnstone, Ringed Plover, Green and Common Sandpipers continued into September. In September also peak numbers on the bunded pools of Greenshank (18: September 9th) and Spotted Redshank (20: September 27th) were reached. Smaller numbers of these two species usually stay all winter. Common Redshank on the bunded pools peaked at a record 4,200 on September 20th. Intermittently, Black-tailed Godwits have reached very large numbers out on Flint Sands, such as the 4,000 on November 20th, though only small numbers have come closer to the Reserve.

A Jack Snipe was spotted on November 28th among the growing numbers of Snipe in front of the Middle Hide (27 there on December 27th) and there were 10 Little Grebe on the bunded pool during November 8th -13th.

Great Skuas are a rare sight on the Reserve and usually in mid-estuary on high tides, but a sick bird took refuge on the banks of the Fly Ash lagoon on September 18th and died overnight.

More reliable winter visitors are the Kingfisher (Field Study Centre, Middle Hide, West Sluice gate and Paper mill stream) and the flocks of Twite (West Hide car park, especially at high tide); the first locally ringed birds were seen on October 19th and numbers had reached 80+ by November 27th. The 19 Redpolls on the birches near the Reserve entrance on December 18th were only the 6th record for the Reserve.

Glenn Morris

An evening with the Nightjars

A couple of years ago, in late winter I was doing something destructive in the garden and quite enjoying it, when a Blackbird suddenly flew close by and quite startled me. I looked up to see it land, tail up, and do its usual trick of nearly falling over. It turned and looked at me with an inky eye. I've always thought of them as rather dim birds but I do like them. It wouldn't be long before I'd be listening to them singing from surrounding rooftops and trees. It was then I thought that I'd never heard a Nightingale; a shame to shuffle off without having heard the most lauded of all songbirds. I assumed I would have to travel south east to Kent or Sussex, Minsmere perhaps, but it didn't happen that year or next. Then I learned they were nearer than I thought.

Cotswold Water Park lies between Cirencester and Swindon. It's an area of almost 30 or 40 square miles and consists of rural villages and farmland. Its characteristic lakes are worked out gravel pits which, having beds of Oxford clay, have filled naturally over the years. Various interested parties, including natural history societies, have collaborated to make it a visitor attraction. You can now go windsurfing or boating, you can cycle or walk waymarked paths, or fish, and there's even a beach where you can while away a summer's day. And given the nature of the terrain there's plenty to interest the wildlife enthusiast.

We'd come for Nightingales. We'd done our homework and we're reasonably confident that we'd recognise one if we heard one. The 'hotspot' was Swillbrook Lakes found down a minor road opposite the turning for Somerford Keynes and now managed by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. We parked near the entrance on a fine evening in early May. About 20 yards in there was an archway of Hawthorn and as we walked through a bird started singing on our left. We could hardly believe our luck. We remained still and silent lest we break the spell, but after a couple of minutes it stopped perhaps to sing again from a distant thicket. At the time a complete circuit of the lake was not possible and as we prepared to make our way back a bravura performer struck up. Did I see it? A shape flitted away as the singing stopped – so maybe. We walked on and sat by the lake. A Common Tern arrived, dipped and departed, Coots squabbled and a Nightingale sang behind us over our left shoulder.

There are those who confess to a disappointment on hearing a Nightingale for the first time and it's true that they lack the continuous rich fruit of the Blackbird or sweet repetition of the Song Thrush. What they have though is a power and a clarity, a plangency that cuts through the evening air like a last beam of sunlight, and like all great singers its song seems to come from its heart, and enter ours.

Later we talked of what we'd heard and seen and we drank to the future of this precious bird.

As I settled in for the night I closed my eyes and I could hear the bird again in my head. I thought of the song, the migration, the return to this same place, the hidden nest and its clutch of eggs, the fact that a couple of years ago there was no Nightingale but only 'particles of grain, and earth, and air, and rain'.

I fell asleep, perchance to dream, possibly of Nightingales.

Keith Shannon

NB: We have a field meeting on Thursday evening 8.00pm on 15th June to hear the Nightjars (see page 4)

Field Trips

Frodsham Marshes. 3rd September

Frodsham Marshes, at the confluence of the River Weaver, Manchester Ship Canal and the Mersey estuary is an excellent area of sludge beds attracting 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.

This however was a very wet, cold Saturday morning after a long period of heavy rainfall and I would like to thank the other two people, Jen and Stella who turned out to keep me company.

We drove up to the settling tanks and parked adjacent to No.6 tank, taking the track between No.6 and No.4, we were able to view a good number of wildfowl: Teal, Shoveler, Shelduck, Tufted Duck, Mallard and Little Grebe together with Coot, Moorhen, Heron, Black headed, Common and lesser Black Backed Gulls.

Unfortunately the water level in the No.6 tank was high and waders were scarce. Walking along the track gave us sightings of Buzzards and a number of Ravens,

On returning to the cars we ventured on to Marsh Farm hoping to see a little more in the wader species. As we were driving we spotted Sparrowhawk and Red Legged Partridge. From Marsh Farm we were able to include Redshank, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Great Crested Grebe and Pochard to the morning tally. There were five Ravens on the bank of the Manchester Ship Canal.

At this point we decided to call it a day and seek shelter and warmth. In total we saw forty seven species, not too bad a tally for a terrible morning. Again, thank you ladies for your company.

Bill Dickinson

RSPB Conwy Reserve and estuary. 3rd December

The last field trip of the year took place at the RSPB Conwy Reserve. A total of seven members plus two guests attended. The temperature stayed cool and the weather remained cloudy all day but at least the rain stayed away.

We met up at the Reserve rather than the Spar car park where some arrived early and took advantage of the cafe. We had a good walk around the Reserve with a surprisingly large number of different sightings. Those who know my ability in identifying different species, or rather lack of it, will not be surprised if I don't list them all here. However I know that other members did add a bird or two to their year lists. I did spot a Little Egret and the Grey Heron but have not had time to identify the other photos yet.

Four of us then went on to Llanfairfechan where we spent an interesting hour - and avoided the cafe. Overall an excellent trip, pleasant company and a good number of sightings. A nice lead into Christmas.

Bob Must

Nest box Maintenance



Betty Lee and a number of DNS members spent a couple of days last month sapling planting and cleaning, sterilising, repairing and re-siting where required, all the nest boxes on the Reserve. Of the 39 nest boxes in situ during 2016, 26 had been occupied at some stage during the year, the remainder being empty apart from the odd (and very handsome) spider.

Five of the boxes had abandoned blue tit eggs in varying numbers in the nests. A sixth box had 1 abandoned Great Tit egg. Two boxes had the remains of dead chicks that appeared to be Blue Tit.

One box had been stolen and the nest abandoned in the brambles.



We erected a nest box specifically designed for Redstart last year and it was pleasing to see that it had been occupied, however we could not find any evidence to show that it was actually a Redstart which had taken up residence. We have had them nesting in our regular boxes in the past.

If anybody would care to volunteer to keep an eye on, say half a dozen boxes next spring, in order to ascertain what species of bird are showing an interest or indeed starting to nest build, it would be most appreciated. Please Contact Betty Lee on: 01244550993.



Club Corner

DNS PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

The group continues to attract around twenty members to meetings which take place on the second Wednesday of each month at 2pm in the 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 Carl Boswell on 01352 757309.

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, from 1-30 until 3-30 pm.

Contact Doreen Boswell on 01352 757309

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.

Website

The password for the members area will change on the weekend 9th/10th January to:

User Name	dnsuser
Password	sdnw7543

www.deenats.org.uk

We are in the process of compiling a list of member's email addresses in order to facilitate rapid communication by mail shot to members if and when the need arises. If you are happy to provide your email address please contact: Bob Must at: www.deenats.org.uk

Treasurer's Report

Deeside Naturalists Society Accounts for the year ended 31st October 2016
Registered Charity No. 510146

ACCOUNTING STATEMENT
Receipts and payments basis

<u>Income</u>	<u>2015/2016</u>	<u>2014/2015</u>
Bank Interest	7.48	7.45
Donations	102.00	159.00
Subscriptions	5130.00	5794.00
Gift Aid Tax Rebate	1051.96	1054.83
Visits	106.00	60.00
Total Income	<u>6397.44</u>	<u>7075.28</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>		
Insurance	113.00	113.00
Printing, Photocopying, Stationery, Postage	1961.88	2148.47
Room Hire	190.00	135.00
Visits	20.00	
Guest Speakers	289.52	453.00
New keys / locks	867.55	372.25
Bird Food	258.21	260.20
FLVC subscription	15.00	15.00
Membership	50.00	50.00
Web Hosting	36.00	36.00
Travel	60.00	60.00
Equipment	1162.49	
Repairs and Maintenance	325.80	1818.98
Total Payments	<u>5349.45</u>	<u>5451.90</u>
Balance for Year	1047.99	1623.38
Cash funds last year end	12999.65	11296.27
Transfer to/from Key Money	- 74.00	80.00
Cash funds this year end	<u>13973.64</u>	<u>12999.65</u>

Bob Lee , Treasurer

Committee Members 2017

The AGM was held on the 9th Dec 2016 and the following members were elected to serve on the committee.

Chairman:	Phil Hotchkiss
Secretary:	Julie Rogers
Treasurer:	Bob Lee
Membership Secretary:	Bob Lane
Indoor Meetings	To be appointed
Outdoor Meetings	Bill Dickinson
Web/Ext Affairs:	Bob Must
Newsletter:	Alan Smethurst
Nature Trail	Dave Coulton
Committee Member:	Pete Haslem
Committee Member:	Sue Haslem

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

Quiz Answers

Answer1

A beehive is a bee holder
A beholder is an onlooker
An onlooker is a spectator
A specked tater is a bad spud

Answer 2

Blotting paper is an ink lined plain
An inclined plane is a slope up
A slow pup is a lazy dog

DEESIDE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Registered Charity 510146



****Membership Renewal** ****Membership Number:** _____

or

***Application for Membership**

Date _____

Title _____ Name _____

Address _____

_____ Postcode _____

Phone No. _____ email Address _____

Family - two adults at the same address and children under 18 £14

Family - as above, one member over 60 £12

Single (under 60) £12

Single (over 60) £10

Student / Junior £3.50

***Application for Membership:** Please add £10 key deposit

Name of additional person (over 18) requiring a permit if required

GIFT AID

If you pay tax, Gift Aid will return the tax paid on your subscriptions/donations to the society with no cost to you. The Society will then receive from HMRC £2.50 for every £10 of the subscription and/or donation paid.

If you would like to support the Society in this way please complete the following:- I would like Deeside Naturalists' Society, Registered Charity No. 510146, to treat all the subscriptions and/or donations I will make to Deeside naturalists' Society from the date of this declaration, until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations.

I confirm that I have paid an amount of UK income tax or capital gains tax equal to any tax reclaimed.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name (print): _____

Address (inc Post Code) _____

****MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL: PLEASE ENCLOSE A STAMPED. SELF ADDRESSED ENVELOPE****

Please send your application together with your cheque, made payable to the DEESIDE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY to the Membership Secretary:

Mr Lane,
Ael-Y-Bryn,
Llanfynydd,
Wrexham,
LL11 5HH