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As you are aware from previous issues of the Newsletter as well as the letter sent out for the EGM this is my last edition as the Editor. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to those editions over the last five years. Without your contributions of articles, quizzes and pictures the Newsletter would not exist. I would also like to thank those who have volunteered to assist in the packing of the Newsletter for mailing. As with the articles it would not be possible to do this without assistance. I find it difficult to believe that it actually has been five years as the time has gone by so quickly.

I've not had room in this edition to include the usual Club Corner page so for new members please remember that we have a thriving Photography and Art Group as well as a Wednesday Club. Details of these and the meeting times can be found on the website under the members page under Groups.

Alan Smethurst has volunteered to take over the Newsletter from me and I wish him well going forward and ask you all to support him in the same way. He can be reached through the Editors email address of:

editor@deesidenaturalists.org.uk

Handing over the Newsletter will allow me more time to concentrate on the website and I intend to work on the 'What Is It' area to improve the picture displays.

Thank you to Helen Simpson

In April we said Goodbye to Helen Simpson who has been a stalwart of the committee since December 2009. She has recently retired and moved out of the area.

Helen has given her time freely and has contributed much to the society particularly in the role of Programme Secretary. We send her our thanks for all she has done and our best wishes for the future in her new home.

Pauline Moulton

Field Trip

Brockholes Nature Reserve Visit 14 Mar 2015

Brockholes is the Lancashire Wildlife Trust's flagship reserve. Its visitor centre floats upon a pontoon in the flooded disused sand and gravel pit.

The group of nine Deeside Naturalists members met in the car park having travelled from various directions an example of how scattered the membership of the society is. A unanimous decision was made to start with a coffee from the café and observe the Meadow lake.

After the coffee we started the walk around the reserve going anti clockwise through the woodland adjacent to Boilton marsh. The woodland was still without leaf cover but the bird activity gave the woodland a real spring feeling. At one particular spot on the trail we were entertained by a Great Tit, Blue Tit, Robin and Nuthatch providing excellent close up views. The views of the Nuthatch were particularly rewarding, all agreed it was unusual to see one at such close quarters. During the woodland walk Long tailed tit and Willow tit were added to the list. Before the end of the woodland walk Ron spotted the rear of two Roe deer through the trees. Distinguishing the deer in the trees proved to be quite a challenge for all of us.

The footpath continued on running parallel to the motorway but giving good views across Ribbleton pool and Nook pool adding more birds to the list including Pochard and an amazing group of eight snipe.

The time was approaching lunch time. Those who had brought their lunch stayed in the hide by the Number one pit while others went back to the café to test the cuisine. On the path back to the visitor centre there were steps set into the bank. These were just too tempting and had to be checked out, the view from the steps was of the Meadow lake and the island with a colony of Black Headed Gulls. Careful inspection of this colony by Betty, Bill and Myself revealed several Mediterranean Gulls. Lapwing, Ringer Plover and Pied Wagtail were also seen.

The circuit of the reserve was then completed returning to the Visitor Centre. Most of the group chose the warmth and comfort of the indoors and hot food. Bill however decided to stay outside and continued scoping whilst eating his sandwiches. This dedication added a Dunlin to the list and more Mediterranean gulls and Ringed Plover.

Having been refreshed by food and warmth the final area of the reserve was to be checked, the river. We reached the river by a devious route as the leader is a bit rusty with map reading especially from visitor leaflets. The view of the river added Curlew and a Green Woodpecker flying over head. The group made their way back to the car park having identified 42 species of bird and 3 mammals.

All agreed Brockholes is a reserve well worth a visit.

Helen Simpson

Reserve Report Nov - April

It has been an extraordinary winter for Snipe on the bunded pools, with many double-figure counts and a maximum of 31 on Jan 26th, joined by two Jack Snipe on Feb 21st.

A woodcock seen on the Rockcliffe path on Dec 24th was only the 3rd Reserve record and the first for 25 years. Wintering Black-tailed Godwit numbers were very low again with a maximum of 1200 on Nov 20th, though there were some excellent counts of 4000+ Dunlin in early January. Both Greenshank and Spotted Redshank stayed throughout the winter with 8-9 birds of each species regularly seen on the bunded pools.

Up to 3 Goldeneye were on the bunded pool from Nov 20th to Dec 13th, including the handsome male below.



Raptors are also looking up, with 3 records of 1-2 Marsh Harriers, two of them over the fly-ash lagoon. On Dec 15th, a Marsh Harrier took a recently-caught teal from a peregrine on Oakenholt Marsh. A second Marsh Harrier then tried to steal the Teal from the first and a buzzard joined in the fun. Most remarkably of all, the teal eventually escaped. Our six Hen Harrier records, however, were all from across the river or along the revetment. Great White Egrets also seem reluctant to come across onto the Reserve proper, and again all 6 records were of birds seen at a distance across the

river. If you see a Great White this side of the river, please make it very clear in the logbooks. The six records of Merlin in 2015 so far is very encouraging, though some of these were also along the revetment opposite the bunded pools. There was a record count of Buzzards on April 2nd with 6 birds in the air together over the grazing fields.

A very successful programme of observation and ringing in support of the Welsh Twite Recovery Project has continued on the Reserve. Counts of 130-180 birds have been recorded, by our twite expert Richard Beckett, this winter and many were trapped in the little cage near West Hide and ringed.



Twite “recoveries” this winter included two birds ringed at the Machrihanish Seabird Observatory in SW Kintyre, a first for Wales and the Dee estuary. Twite were still present in April though in declining numbers.

Spring migrants are arriving, more or less on schedule, with early Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps, later Willow Warblers and Redstart, plus very recent Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat. It’s well worth scanning the grazing fields very carefully at this time of year, especially where there

has been rabbit activity, since Wheatear numbers can be quite high (15 on Apr 28th). You might even see one building a nest (photo below).



The marsh is looking attractive in spring with the white Scurvy Grass putting on a good show. Even when the expected flush of migrant waders in May is over, there will still be lots of see on the Reserve. The fly-ash lagoon is a hot-bed of family life in summer.

Glenn Morris, May 1st, 2015.

Chairman's Report

Dear Members

I would like to thank all those that attended the EGM on Tuesday 28th April; it was an encouraging sign to see so many let's hope you all turn up for the AGM in December.

I would like to remind the members of the fact that if we do not have a committee we cannot operate as a society according to the charity commission rules and would have to close.

If this happens it will be the end of the nature reserve on Deeside and we will never get it back, so please remember to continue your support and come along to the next AGM.

I would like to remind members that there is a Wednesday group that meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays come along have a chat any topic, have a walk and have a drink normally between 12:30 and 15:00 if it is fine it could be 16:00 before we lock up.

*Phil Hotchkiss.
Chairman.*

Quiz

Just a short quiz this month due to the number of other articles

1. What are the three types of snake native to the British Isles?
2. Name all the National Parks in the UK.
3. Which British butterfly can be found breeding only in the Norfolk Broads?
4. Poor man's Asparagus and Glasswort are both alternative names for what food?
5. To which bird family does the Jay belong?
6. Name the peaks in Snowdonia over 1000 meters in height.
7. The Connah's Quay power station was first commissioned in 1954. Since that time it has had five operators. Can you name them all?

Field Trip

Seaforth Dock Liverpool Saturday 18th April

It is no secret that Peel Ports, owners of the Seaforth Dock Complex are not keen to have birdwatching trips into the Nature Reserve within the dock area. When I volunteered to lead such a trip I had no idea of the difficulties involved. On an exploratory visit my prior request for a day pass was ignored. Entry was gained after a lot of paperwork, production of passports etc. The prospect of leading a group of members was daunting to say the least. My Plan 'B' was to go on to Southport Marshside if we failed to get in.

On the day of the field trip I was surprised at the wide area DNS members came from, Deeside, Wrexham, Warrington, Mold, Birkenhead, Mid Cheshire and Chester. 16 members came and in the event we gained entry without delay or fuss. Day Passes and Vehicle Passes were ready at the gate in response to my emails. A huge relief I can tell you.

The Nature Reserve is excellent, it isn't posh, it is no RSPB Reserve but to my mind it is the way a Nature Reserve should be. The weather was good and the light was perfect on the day. A good list of birds was seen, especially pleasing was the Scaup, Yellow Wagtail, and Common Sandpipers. Wheatears were plentiful. The sun brought out the seasonal butterflies. Migrants were passing through, we had good views of Willow Warblers. Resident Reed Buntings and Linnets were showing well. All the usual Gulls and waders were plentiful.

The advantage of being in a group is, nothing is missed and those birds seen are shared with others present. Members of Lancashire Wildlife Trust there were helpful. I would like to mention the help and encouragement I had from Fiona Whitfield, manager of the Reserve, her help was invaluable.

Finally I would like to thank the members who came and who's company made for a pleasant days nature watching. Would I go again? Oh yes, just let me know when it is organised.

Bill Griffiths.

Please note:

We have received a note from the Lancashire Wildlife Trust that if anyone wishes to join it after visiting Seaforth please quote project 325 to www.lancswt.org.uk. This will generate money to the reserve at Seaforth.

Ed

Website

The password for the Members area will change on the weekend 13th/14th June to:


www.deesidenaturalists.org.uk

Cattle? Egrets

It was good to read in Glen Morris's report that a cattle egret landed in 'our' reserve. I might have glimpsed its head when it was lurking in Burton Mere's wetlands but would have been even more delighted to see it on the Welsh side. Being pedantic we would like to comment on Greg's remark "A bird with an appropriate name for once". Really?

Last year we snapped the less common sub species, the 'horse egret' and later we came upon the 'sheep egret'. But this was in South Africa.



Cattle egrets also associate with elephant, wildebeest, rhino, ostrich – anything big enough to be able to stir up invertebrates and other tasty morsels from the ground.

And of course – cattle!



Bob and Betty Lee

At least I spelt the title correctly this time! Ed

Events Programme

Field Trips

Saturday June 20th - *Cemlyn Bay and South Stack*

(Please note the Programme Card issued with the January Newsletter shows Sunday in error).

For Sandwich, Common and Arctic terns at Cemlyn and nesting seabirds at South Stack. Meet at Spar car park at 9am.

Contact Pauline Moulton on 01244 313404 for more details.

Saturday September 12th - *Mere Sands Wood*

Lancashire Wildlife trust Reserve - wood and wetland in amongst farm land. Walks and trails on the flat with six hides and a small visitor centre. Meet at the Spar car park at 9am.

Contact Bill Griffiths on 01244 815941 for more information.

Indoor Meetings

Friday 18th September

Mike Leach, **In the blink of an eye.** Mike's photos capture high speed action. All images in this talk encompass a time-span of less than 1/500th of a second.

Members' Events on the Reserve

Sunday July 5th

Join us on the reserve for a gentle walk to study the wild flowers. Meet at the Field Study Centre at 2pm.

Contact Helen Simpson on 07711 964830 for more information.

Any changes to the programme will be notified on the DNS website:

www.deesidenaturalists.org.uk

Summary of EGM 28th April

All members were sent a letter inviting them to attend the EGM. 35 members attended and 13 sent apologies. The chairman welcomed members and reiterated the reason for calling the meeting i.e. the critical need to fill vacant posts on the committee both now and in December when both the Secretary and Membership Secretary will resign.

Following the letter having been received by members and prior to the meeting there were volunteers for the role of Newsletter Editor and Programme Secretaries, the Programme Secretary role having been split into 2. It was proposed and seconded at the meeting that these volunteers be co-opted to the committee. This brings the committee number back to 10 which is the maximum number allowed by the constitution. This means that for now the Dee Estuary Conservation Group representative role will have to be filled by an existing committee member.

The secretary explained that although the current vacancies had been filled it was important to emphasise that the two posts which will become vacant later in the year are pivotal roles and although the immediate shortfall has been rectified, we cannot be complacent and need to ensure that these two posts will be filled in December.

The secretary also appealed for members to volunteer to help out on the Open Day and with maintenance tasks and there was a reasonable response from those members present.

Mr Keith Steward, former power station manager, who was involved in the creation of the reserve and the setting up of the lease to Deeside Naturalists' Society, expressed his sadness at the current situation. He urged members to do all they can to enable the society to continue. He warned that if the reserve was closed and access to the reserve (by members) lost that he foresaw that it would never be regained. Those present applauded this speech.

In closing the chairman reminded those present of the date of the Annual General Meeting (11th December 2015) and encouraged members to come along to support the society.

Quiz Answers

1 - The Grass Snake, Adder and Smooth snake. 2 - (15) Brecon Beacons, Brecons, Cairngorms, Dartmoor, Exmoor, Lake District, Loch Lomond, New Forest, Northumberland, North York Moors, Peak District, Pembrokeshire Coast, Snowdonia, South Downs and Yorkshire Dales. 3 - The Swallowtail. 4 - The Crow. 5 - The Crow. 6 - Snowdon 1085m, Crib y Ddysgl 1065m, Glyder Fawr 1001m, Carnedd Dafydd 1044m, Carnedd Llewelyn 1064m (Others like Tryfan are over 3000ft but under 1000m). 7 - British Electricity Authority, Central Electricity Authority, Central Electricity Generating Board, Powergen, E.ON.