

# Newsletter



Issue 132

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Thanks to all those who contributed to this edition. Also, thanks to all those who volunteered, some time ago, to assist in the packing of the newsletter for posting. If you haven't been called yet don't worry I still have your names on the list and the Christmas edition is usually the big one!

The details of the programme of events for the rest of the year can be found on page seven, along with any relevant notices. I intend to make this a regular feature to remind members of the events and advise you of any changes to them. The full programme can also be found on the website at: [www.deesidenaturalists.org.uk](http://www.deesidenaturalists.org.uk). Speaking of the website we have been experiencing a few problems recently with emails and access to the site itself. That, hopefully, has now been resolved and both should be back to normal. If anyone is still having problems logging onto the site please let me know via email to: [editor@deesidenaturalists.org.uk](mailto:editor@deesidenaturalists.org.uk). I am also still looking for volunteers to help build the bird, butterfly and plant identification pages. Anyone interested in helping can contact me at the same email address.

A few members attended the Rutland Bird Fair. As my wife had booked us both on one of the evening trips around the reservoir to see the Ospreys we decided to stop overnight. We didn't see any but the commentary by Johnny Kingdom more than made up for it. For those of you who have never been to the bird fair, this is a great opportunity to spend a fortune on equipment, see a host of celebrities and book wildlife holidays for virtually any place on the planet! I found the layout of the fair confusing at first but eventually found my way round the site. The hotel we stayed at is worth a mention: Stoke Rochford Hall. It is about 30 mins away from Rutland Water and has excellent grounds that you can walk around. While the rooms in the main part of the hotel are not cheap they have other very good ones in the old stables at around £40.00 a room per night which includes a cooked breakfast.

## Management Meeting

The e.on Annual Management meeting took place recently and was attended by two members of our committee. Among the things discussed were the number of Black Tailed Godwits which appear to be down on last years numbers. However, it is believed they have redistributed amongst the estuary as the numbers overall are increasing. Also, a new farmer has been allowed to graze his sheep on the fields and the Crassula that was in the Northern Marsh Grassland seems to have been eradicated. Further details will be published on the website in due course.

# Members Events

## Bat talk & Walk May 14<sup>th</sup>

There is a particular difficulty arranging any event for a species that is dependent on the weather, or more specifically dependent on good weather.

Amanda Davies (Flintshire's Biodiversity Officer) and I chose May as a month when female bats will be feeding well to feed themselves and their young.

As the day drew near Amanda and I became more concerned that the weather on the night would not suit even hungry nursing bats. However, Biodiversity Officers in my personal experience are resourceful and Amanda proved this on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup>.

The assembled attendees met as arranged at the Field Study centre (only a small group). Amanda gave her talk to remind us of the species to be found in the UK and particularly in this area of North Wales. Of the vulnerability of these fascinating creatures, and facts such as Pipistrelle's can consume up to 3000 midges a night. Without this consumption just think how many more bites we would all suffer from midges.

Amanda also explained the work she does as a Biodiversity Officer surveying buildings for bats prior to work being carried out, and advising how and when work can proceed without disturbing them. Also the work done by her and the Bat Conservation Trust in surveying bats and their roosts, and educating and rescuing young and injured bats.

As a bonus and to make up for the potential poor weather, Amanda's assistant, had a Bat with her. It was a young Long Eared bat that had been hand reared having been found as a youngster. It was explained that as it was so young it would not be able to be released successfully as it would have missed the essential education from its mother on aspects of bat life. It was hand fed on meal worms which meant it did not have to fly to catch food and as a result was unable or didn't have a need to fly. Personally being able to see a bat up close and personal is always a thrill, and gave the evening a positive lift.

When it was dusk we set off with the detectors to see if any bats had braved the unseasonal cool damp weather to hunt for insects that had also ventured out despite the weather. We did detect some common Pipistrelle's flying along the tree edge on the road from the field study centre.

Although we did not detect many bats on the night I can confirm they do use the reserve and surrounding area. I have been out in the area during the second week of August and detected Common and Soprano Pipistrelle's Daubenton's and Noctule's all close to the reserve.

So we are supporting Bats on the reserve even if it takes good weather (for insects) a bat detector and patience to identify that they are there.

*Helen Simpson*

## Bat Websites

<http://www.bats.org.uk>  
<http://www.bio.bris.ac.uk/research/bats/britishbats/>  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/life/Bat>  
<http://www.bat-mania.co.uk>

# MEMBERS EVENTS

## Butterfly Day on the Reserve 6<sup>th</sup> July

Jack Swan, an expert on butterflies, plants, bees and other insects, came along to lead this stroll around our reserve and help us to identify the species present.

The weather was perfect on the day for butterflies as it was sunny, with a light breeze and a temperature between 18 and 20c. It hadn't looked too promising a few days earlier when Jack came to visit the reserve to explore the different habitats.

In the morning we set off along the Nature Trail, and beyond, onto the estuary where there was an abundance of Sea Milkwort (*Glauca maritima*) in bloom. We went under the bridge to the beginning of Compartment 3 of our reserve. This area had good examples of White Mullein in full bloom.

The butterfly species recorded during the morning were: Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Large Skipper (which Jack netted so that we could have a closer look at it), Green Veined White, Common Blue and Red Admiral. Also recorded were Five-spot Burnet and Cinnabar moth. Just to put the record straight Jack contacted me later regarding the Five-spot Burnet seen on our reserve. It was actually a Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet (*Zygaena Ionicerae* ssp. *latomarginata*) as the true Five-spot Burnet (*Zygaena trifolii*) is a southern England species.

As we were returning to the Centre for lunch along the pathway by the wall a swarm of Honey bees was spotted in one of the trees. A spectacular sight!

Following lunch we made our way along the road to the Wetland Meadow area of the reserve. The nettles here were covered in Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell caterpillars. Jack netted a Vestal Cuckoo Bumble bee (*Bombus vestilas*) and other bee species identified were: Honey bee, a queen Garden Bumble bee, Tree Bumble bee, Buff White Tailed bee, Common Carder bee and Red Tailed bumble bee.

The weather obviously suited the Large Skipper as we saw many of these in this part of the reserve. Again one was netted so that we could see it up close. Other species of butterfly recorded during the afternoon were: Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown, Large White and Small White.

Also netted were a Snout moth and a Common Blue Damsel fly.

All present enjoyed the day and appreciated Jack's expertise and knowledge in identifying all that was seen.

Everything netted was released safely back into the wild.

*Christine Hamer*

## Butterfly Websites

<http://butterfly-conservation.org/304/north-wales-branch.html>

<http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/links.php>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_butterflies\\_of\\_Great\\_Britain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_butterflies_of_Great_Britain)

# Reserve Report

April to July 2013

There were mixed fortunes in the breeding season this year. The Peregrine nest on the tower failed, apparently from natural causes. Something must have gone wrong after May 24<sup>th</sup> when an adult was seen carrying a summer Black-tailed Godwit to the nest site.



One or two Little Ringed Plover have been seen regularly all summer, but not really in suitable nesting habitat. On the other hand, Mute Swans raised 7 well-grown cygnets and the Oystercatcher pair on the lagoon raised two young. At least one pair of Shelduck raised two young on the Reserve and Little Grebe, Coot and Moorhen pairs all raised at least one brood.

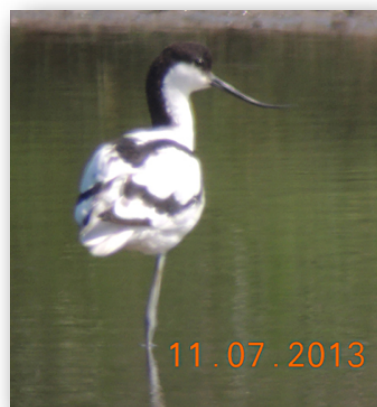


The poor spring weather meant that some wintering birds were not anxious to leave. Twite stayed until April 24<sup>th</sup> and a very late Brambling was found on May 18<sup>th</sup>. These overlapped with

the arrival of summer birds with the first Redstart on April 18<sup>th</sup>, a massive count of 35 Wheatear on April 20<sup>th</sup>, Yellow and White Wagtails on April 21<sup>st</sup>, a single Whinchat on May 9<sup>th</sup> and an unusual Spotted Flycatcher on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Other unusual sightings, apart from the Black Redstart mentioned in the last newsletter, were the second Red Kite of the year on May 1<sup>st</sup> and a Great White Egret on May 25<sup>th</sup>. On July 21<sup>st</sup>, there were over 60 Little Egrets on the Reserve, mostly on the bunded pools, and 13 Grey Herons on July 7<sup>th</sup>.

The return migration got off to a good start with two Avocets that have been present on the river and bunded pools since July 7<sup>th</sup>.

A Spotted Redshank appeared briefly on July 26<sup>th</sup> when Greenshank numbers had built up to 18. A Green Sandpiper has also been seen



in the fly ash lagoon area, along with several Common Sandpipers. A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was seen on the feeders in July and a Green Woodpecker was photographed by the road along the east hides in early August. Great Spotted Woodpeckers are, of course, regular visitors to the Reserve. Many thanks to all members who recorded these observations in the hide logbooks.

*Glenn Morris, August 5th.*

# Another World Part 1

There have been several books written about the various aspects of the secret world of birds and their habitats. However, a couple of weeks ago I discovered another ‘secret’ aspect of them. And while I had heard something about it before I never realized how important it was or how seriously it was taken by those in authority.

Bletchley Park, the code breaking arm of British intelligence during the Second World War, is now a tourist attraction dealing with the work of the code breakers especially those like Bill Tutte, Alan Turing, Dilly Knox and Tommy Flowers to name but a few. Situated in Hut 8 – where Alan Turing had his office is a room dedicated to that secret aspect of birds – the homing pigeon and some of their exploits. In one corner of the room is a TV playing a 45 minute video on a continuous loop, covering the history of this. At first, you could be forgiven for thinking it is some kind of elaborate hoax. But gradually you begin to realize it’s not and it develops into a fascinating facet of the Second World War.

In 1939, the authorities believed that radio had, effectively, made the use of homing pigeons redundant. But radios can fail, and due to the efforts of a Major W H Osman the National Pigeon Service was eventually formed to help counter that problem. At first they were used primarily with Bomber Command who started to carry two pigeons in its aircraft for emergency communication should the aircraft be forced to ditch in the sea.

One famous example of this was a pigeon called Winkie who was released from a Beaufort bomber when it went down in the

North Sea in February 1942. She arrived back flying through atrocious weather to RAF Leuchars. This allowed the Air Sea Rescue to pinpoint the location of the crew and rescue them. The crew toasted Winkie (*by raising their glasses not by cooking her*) when they were safely back in the Officers Mess. In fact Winkie was the first Pigeon to be awarded the Dicken medal. (See page 8 for further details).

As their importance increased, pigeon racing was stopped and birds of prey were culled along the coast to allow the pigeons to return home unhindered. The Germans took it seriously enough to train Peregrine Falcons to hunt them down as they left the continent.

Birds were also dropped by parachute to Resistance workers who attached messages to them before releasing them so they could fly back to their British base. Any resistance worker caught with a pigeon faced death by firing squad. One such person was Louis Berrier - the english translation of his execution notice reads: “*Louis Berrier*



*is charged with having released a pigeon with a message for England. He, was therefore, sentenced to death for espionage*”. A copy of that notice can be seen at: <http://ww2today.com/2nd-august-1941-life-in-occupied-france>

The photo shows the type of container used to parachute pigeons into occupied France. What the pigeon thought about it is not recorded.

In a future article I will cover the role of the pigeons own secret service MI14 and how the allies infiltrated British pigeons into the German’s own pigeon service turning them into double agents! (*It’s true!*).

*Bob Must*

# Website Password Change

The password for the members pages will change on the weekend 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> September. The new one will be:

User Name:	dnsuser
Password:	foglogdog

Please note that both the username and password are case sensitive and should be entered in lower case.

## Quiz

This month the quiz is a straightforward series of questions loosely based on birds, animals and general nature. Answers can be found on the back page.

1. What is the biggest lake in Canada?
2. To which animal does the term 'porcine' refer?
3. How many miles as the crow flies is it from John o'Groats to Land's End? 603, 703 or 803?
4. What does a Hippologist study?
5. Which work of literature includes the character Arthur 'Boo' Radley?
6. What is Taurophobia the fear of?
7. What was the name of the cat at 10 Downing Street between 1989 and 1997?
8. What is the national animal of Mauritius?
9. What is the name of the fruit produced by the blackthorn?
10. What type of fruit is a 'Norfolk Beefing'?
11. Old Man's Beard and Traveller's Joy are names for a variety of which flower?
12. The bark of which tree was the original source of making aspirin?
13. What bird is the international symbol of happiness?
14. What was Long John Silver's parrot's name?
15. Emperor, Rock Hopper and Jackass are all types of what?
16. In what year was the first Crufts dog show held in London?
17. In the 1994 Disney film the Lion King, which actor provided the voice of the evil lion 'Scar'?
18. Conchology is the study of what?
19. What type of bird is a yaffingale?
20. What was the name of the woodpecker in the children's television show 'Bagpuss'?
21. The photo on the right was taken on the DNS Reserve. Where?



# Notices

## Field Meetings and Events

### **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September**

Conway RSPB reserve and estuary

Leader Dave Peate

Meet at Queensferry (Spar public car park) at 8am

### **Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October**

Martin Mere WWT Reserve. Standard ticket price £10.09 per adult (concessions £7.45).

Leader - Bob Must (Please Note the change of phone number from the one in the programme - 07712 713397)

### **Maintenance Day**

The next maintenance day will take place on the 28<sup>th</sup> September.

Meet at the Field Studies Centre at 9.30am.

### **Open Day**

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October between 10am - 3pm.

## Indoor Meetings

Unless otherwise stated all indoor meetings start at 7.30pm and are held in:

Connah's Quay Community Centre

Tuscan Way off Chapel Street

Connah's Quay

CH5 4DZ

### **Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September**

Ann Brenchley and Ian Spence - The North Wales Breeding Atlas

### **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October**

Keith Offord - "Sky Dancers"

### **Friday 15<sup>th</sup> November**

Margaret Sixsmith - Hilbre Island

### **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December**

AGM

## Nature Trail

The work being carried out by National Grid on the Nature Trail has now been completed for this year.

## Reserve Maintenance

An ongoing programme of hide maintenance is taking place over the next few months so there may be some disruption to the viewing facilities while this takes place. Also, routine maintenance for compartment one will continue through September.



# Club Corner

## DNS Photographic 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 Club

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.

There is a good mix of viewpoints, experiences and ages within the group, and at the end of the day we all go home still friends, having enjoyed each others company.

# The Dickin Medal

In 1943 Maria Dickin, founder of the People’s Dispensary for Sick Animals, established the Dickin Medal - the animal equivalent of the Victoria Cross. It was made of bronze with a vertical striped ribbon of green, brown and light blue. It carried the words “For Gallantry” and “We Also Serve”. There were 54 medals awarded between 1943 and 1949 - some retrospectively as in Winkies case (see page 5). During that time Pigeons won 32, dogs 18, Horses 3 and one went to a cat (Simon, resident of HMS Amethyst August 1949). The award was revived in 2000 and as at 2012 a total of 64 had been awarded.

# Answers to Quiz

1) Lake Bear, 2) Pigs, 3) 603 miles, 4) Horses, 5) To Kill A Mockingbird (by Harper Lee) - I did say it was loosely based on nature! 6) A fear of bulls and cows, 7) Humphrey, 8) The Dodo, 9) Sloe, 10) An Apple, 11) Clematis, 12) Willow, 13) Bluebird, 14) Captain Flint, 15) Penguin, 16) 1886, 17) Jeremy Irons, 18) Shells, 19) A Green Woodpecker, 20) Professor Yaffle, 21) Outside the front of the Field Studies Centre.