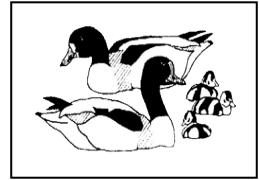


Newsletter



Issue 141

September 2016

Registered Charity No. 510146

Welcome to the September edition of the newsletter.

A belated and sincere thank you to Hazel Rothwell for your repair work and replacements to the bird feeders adjacent to the Dee hide.

On the subject of maintenance, you will no doubt all be aware of the white boards in the hides for comments relating to breakages/damage/issues required to be brought to the Committee's attention. Sadly there have been some rather derogatory messages left on the boards, which, apart from not being in the spirit of the Society, are totally unacceptable. I would suggest that maybe those persons might care to get down, dirty your hands and do your bit rather than leave it to the same few all the time - there is no magic wand that fixes things, it is down to the good will of volunteers.

It has been noted that random head counts on the Reserve do not always tally with the signing in numbers at the barrier. It is imperative that everybody who is on the Reserve (including visitors) are duly signed in. This is not yet another 'paperwork exercise' but a safety directive by Uni Per. They need to know exactly how many people are on the Reserve in the event of an emergency at the plant. Just as important is the need to sign out when leaving the Reserve for exactly the same reasons.

Staying on the same theme, a short while ago we had a rarity on the Reserve and the word went out by social media, phone, word of mouth etc. resulting in a huge influx of 'twitchers' descending on the site causing much disruption on the Reserve and a significant security problem for Uni Per. I would remind you that the Reserve is a closed site and some of these visitors' behaviour was totally unacceptable, causing damage to fences and going into restricted areas in a totally selfish manner. So we would ask that you don't broadcast rarities to the world as further incidents like this could lead to far reaching consequences for the Society. Thank you.

Alan Smethurst

Field Trip - *World's End 3rd April 2016*

World's End lies on a single track road from the small village of Minera near Wrexham, which crosses Esclusham Mountain and the Ruabon Moors to the top of the Eglwyseg valley. World's End, a spectacular and dominating outcrop of Carboniferous Limestone from World's End and Eglwyseg to Trevor gives the North side of the Dee Valley an easily identifiable character with the 'Seven Sisters', great curves of outcropping limestone, providing walkers, ramblers and birders with panoramic views all along its length.

From the end of March until early June, male Black Grouse gather at dawn on the edges of the forest to strut their stuff, flash their white tail feathers and impress watching females, hiding nearby.

Shortly after leaving the cars we were fortunate enough to be viewing from the road across a small gorge, a group that comprised of 25 males (blackcocks) and 2 females (greyhens), although the females required some good spotting as their plumage provided good camouflage.

The noises were a smooth bubbling call and a loud throaty, scratchy, hissing call that seemed to be the threatening tone. All this was being acted out on the only flat and open area around. The males were showing across the display area, the hens 'running the gauntlet' as they passed by through the males.

The males seemed to posture, pose and threaten each other with bright red inflated wattles and rasping noises but without striking each other. A wonderful spectacle to watch as each bird either stood as an onlooker or stepped up to show his prowess towards another bird, tail feathers held high and head kept close to the ground like a raging bull ready to attack a red rag.

After watching this spectacle for some considerable time we made our way across the open moorland towards the cliffs at World's End and saw a Red Grouse, Kestrel, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Curlew, Stonechat, Meadow Pipit and Raven.

Back at the car park, before departing, a number of woodland and open country birds were seen and heard: Chiffchaff, Chaffinch, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Wren and Pheasant. Just before leaving the moor we spotted a Northern Wheatear on a patch of waste ground.

I would like to thank the few who made the effort of getting up at 5.30am and we were justly rewarded. In all as a group we probably saw circa 70 Black Grouse in total, which has to be one of the year's birding highlights, together with another 25 species.

Field Trip - *Woolston Eyes 16th April 2016*

We were met at the barrier to the reserve, which is adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal, by one of the reserve wardens, who led the convoy of cars to the reserve car park. The target bird of the day was Black Necked Grebe and Woolston Eyes is one of the few places in the North West where these birds breed.

Woolston Eyes Conservation Group is a voluntary organisation formed in 1979, which manages the rich and varied wildlife of the deposit grounds.

Its aim is to promote the study and conservation of the wildlife and habitat of the area with particular regard to the ornithology.

The four beds at Woolston Deposit Grounds SSSI are managed as a nature reserve by the Woolston Eyes Conservation Group in agreement with the Manchester Ship Canal Company. Parts of the site are still in use to accommodate dredging from the Ship Canal.

Whilst we were walking past an area of reeds there was a group of ringers with mist nets out who were ringing the birds caught.

One of the ringers was handling a Willow Warbler, a long distance migrant and long winged in appearance. It has longer primary feathers with a primary projection of up to three quarters of the exposed tertials than that of the Chiffchaff which it is often confused with.

From one of the viewing platforms we were able to see four Black Necked Grebes, but this was surpassed from the main hide overlooking No.3 bed where another six were seen. In addition, at one of the feeding stations there were several late staying Bramblings who had yet to take the return trip to Scandinavia.

There was a good selection of ducks on No.3 bed and around the trails we saw/heard Cetti's Warblers, Sedge Warblers, Reed Warblers, Whitethroats, Blackcaps, Willow Warblers, Chiffchaffs, Swallows, House and Sand Martins and Kestrel.

Unfortunately we did dip on a Mediterranean Gull that had flown through only minutes before we arrived.

Bill Dickinson

Reserve Report Jun-Aug 2016

A new bird for the Reserve was the **White-winged Black Tern**, which stayed briefly over the fly-ash lagoon on June 16th before continuing to Shotton Pools and Burton Mere RSPB later on the same day.

Return passage of waders began in early July when the first summer-plumage Spotted Redshanks appeared. Spotted Redshanks and Greenshanks are now reaching double figures on the Bunded Pools, which also hold Redshanks (2000+) and Black-tailed Godwit (1000+) at high tides and we can expect such numbers to continue throughout September and October.



(Several 100 **Black-tailed Godwit** on the fly-ash lagoon)
photo: G E Morris

Among the more exotic waders, the Reserve had brief visits from Avocet, Curlew, Sandpiper, Little Stint and Sanderling during the second half of August, though only in small numbers, as well as more regular visitors, like Whimbrel, Ringed Plover and Common Sandpiper. The Kingfisher is also being seen frequently again, especially in the Bunded Pool area, and our wintering ducks, like Teal and Widgeon are just beginning to return.

Hobbies have been seen on at least four occasions in late July - August, with two birds together over the Marsh on August 20th, one of them taking a Swallow.

A more reliable visitor has been the juvenile Green Woodpecker, usually along the Nature Trail / Bunded pools area. Birds that produced young on the fly-ash lagoon included Mute Swan, Tufted Duck, Mallard, Little Grebe, Coot and Moorhen. The Marshes are also looking colourful again now that the Michaelmas Daisies are in flower.



(An adult **Hobby** on Oakenholt Marsh)
photo: Peter and Sue Haslam

One of our Black-tailed Godwits was ringed as a one-year-old near La Rochelle, France in 2007, so is now 10 years old (spotted at QCNR by P Haslem and R Beckett). It was seen in the UK only once before, at Inner Marsh Farm in July 2010, and if its past route is anything to go by, it will soon be travelling along the Atlantic coast of France to spend winter in Portugal or even further south.

G. Morris

Following the article on the demise of the ash tree it would be sad to see the countryside denuded of this stately tree. Our ash tree which was around 200 years old and showing no sign of any disease was felled in the November gales of 2015 and I was prompted to write this poem:



A friend in the field
Standing head and shoulders above the others
Reaching out to the sky
Foretelling all the summers
Whether wet or whether dry
A soak or a splash
never really right, never really wrong

You were there when we came some thirty years
ago
Stately, watching our efforts to make the garden
grow
Our bees have swarmed amongst your flowers
The sheep have sheltered beneath your bowers
You must have been there in the time
Our country waged two World Wars
And before even then
Did you know the sadness we would feel
That Sunday morning after gales
When Carl at the window, shaded his eyes and said
"The Ash tree is down, gone, gone"

Now still your imprint on the ground
A severed trunk
Fallen tears of olive heartwood
And piles of logs to keep us warm
A table top, bench, fence posts,
A gate post and perhaps more
For children at the local school
will sit on your lap and count your rings
Tell tales around the fire and other things
And learn of time before
You were gone.

Doreen Boswell
31st January 2016

Field Trip- *Lake Vyrnwy 14th may 2016*

Lake Vyrnwy is a working farm, and the RSPB support farming activities that benefit farmland wildlife - including birds such as Curlews. These vary from growing appropriate crops to managing river corridors, fencing woodlands and restoring walls and hedges. Dry heath on the reserve supports key breeding birds such as Ring Ouzels, Curlews and Red Grouse. The RSPB use burning, mowing and grazing to maintain just the right mix of heather and grassland for these birds. They also cut back encroaching plantations and maintain the blanket bog by blocking up old drainage channels. Oak woodland on the reserve supports breeding birds such as Pied Flycatchers. The RSPB are also expanding the woodland by introducing more broad-leaved trees to neighbouring conifer plantations.

We arrived at the small car park next to the cafe, where a number of the group were enjoying a second breakfast.



We decided that we would visit the near hide before taking one of the many trails. From the hide we saw a good number of woodland birds that included numerous Siskins feeding on the feeders, also Nuthatch, Chiffchaff, Great Tit, Redpoll and Coal Tit. The circular walk that we took, part of which was alongside the River Vyrnwy, afforded us with good views of Pied Flycatchers together with Swift, Buzzard, Goldcrest and Willow Warbler.

After lunch we moved to Rhiwargo at the far end of the reservoir and walked along the Avons Eiddew and Nadroedd. The birds seen here were more of open country and stream and included Raven, Tree Pipit, Grey and Pied Wagtail, Dipper and a Cuckoo was heard but went unseen.

Bill Dickinson

Open Day 2016

Sunday 2nd October 10am to 3pm

High tide at 12.43pm, 30.2ft (9.2m)

The Reserve is open to the public. Volunteers are always needed to help. Contact: Julie Rogers 07858 776 387

Field Trip - *Bempton 12th June 2016*

It was difficult to believe as we got closer to Bempton that we were driving towards a cold, 15C North Sea coastal sea fret, this was after having had a few days of temperatures in the mid 20's, even 28C on one day. The mist was being forced up and over the tops of the cliffs.

Each year over 250,000 birds flock to the cliffs between Bempton and Flamborough, many to find a mate and rear their young. From April to August the cliffs are alive with nest building adults or young chicks taking their first faltering steps.

Between mid-April and mid-July the much loved Puffin makes its home here, From February to October thousands of Gannets nest on the cliffs of the only mainland gannetry in England. Bempton also has the largest Kittiwake colony in mainland Britain.



We met up in the car park before heading to the reception centre, where outside the cafe were flocks of Tree Sparrows.

Walking down to the various viewing platforms we saw House Sparrows, Jackdaws, Goldfinches and Chaffinches. From the specialist constructed viewing platforms we had tremendous sightings, both on the cliffs and on the sea, of Razorbills, Kittiwakes, Gannets, Guillemots, Fulmars and Puffins. We also saw a couple of Shags flying low over the sea. Around the clifftops were Greenfinch, Robin, Reed Bunting and other farmland birds.

After lunch we moved to Flamborough Head which is marked by a stretch of rugged white cliffs surrounding the small village of Flamborough. From the clifftops we were able to see similar sea birds as seen at Bempton, including Cormorant, Lesser Black Backed Gull and Oystercatcher, but there was a greater variety of farmland birds including Pheasant, Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Linnet, Stonechat, Magpie and a solitary Yellowhammer, hirundines included Swallow, House Martin and Sand Martin.

In all we saw circa 35 bird species, not the greatest number, but we all left the area with the memory of wonderful views of spectacular numbers of seabirds in a spectacular setting - and the mist had cleared!

Bill Dickinson

Field Meetings 2016

Saturday 3rd December.

RSPB Conwy reserve and estuary. Short days and pre Christmas blues !
Waders, wildfowl and more. Please bring RSPB membership card. Meet at the Spar car park at 9.00am. Contact Bob Must 07712 713 397 for more details.

Bill Dickinson

Any suggestions from members of places they would like to visit or indeed any of your favourite places you would like to share with fellow members would always be most welcome.

Please contact Bill Dickinson on 07968 438 121

Indoor Meetings 2016

Friday 16th September.

North Wales Police, Wildlife Protection & Rural Crime Team.

The work of the team including badger digging, bat disturbance, damage to SSSI's etc.

Friday 21st October.

Mandy Cartwright, Wepre Park Ranger.

A talk on the work and wildlife of Wepre Park including specimens and exhibits.

NB this talk will be held at the new Field Centre in Wepre Park and not in the usual venue.

Friday 18th November.

Paul Furnborough, N.E. Wales Wildlife.

The life and times of the Great Crested Newt.

Friday 9th December.

AGM

Damien Brady

Group Activities

Why not consider joining one of the Society's group activities

Art Group:

Every second Thursday of the month at 2.00pm
Contact: Doreen Boswell on 01352 757309

Photographic Group:

Every 2nd Wednesday of the month at 2.00pm
Contact: Carl Boswell on 01352 757309

Wednesday Group:

Every 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 1.00pm

All activities are held at the Field Studies Centre

Website

The password for the members area will change on the weekend 24th/25th September

User Name

Password

Web site: www.deenats.org.uk

Please note the website Email address is now: webeditor@deenats.org.uk