

DEESIDE NATURALISTS SOCIETY BIRD REPORT, 2015

COVERING THE CONNAH'S QUAY NATURE RESERVE AND THE RSPB RESERVE AT OAKENHOLT MARSH.

By: Glenn Morris, February, 2016.

With Butterfly Report by Christine Hamer.

Access to CQNR, its five bird hides and other facilities is available 24/7 (with minor exceptions) exclusively to members of the Deeside Naturalists Society. Membership details and application forms can be found at www.deesidenaturalists.org.uk



Wheatear with nest material (?) on the Nature Trail (photo: GEM)

The bird species list for the Connah's Quay Reserve (inc. RSPB Oakenholt Marsh) has now reached over 230 in its 40-year history of bird recording, although this total does include about 16 that are likely or definite escapes from captivity.

This year alone 137 species were recorded: Three new species were **Willow Tit** and **Ring-billed Gull**, and a **Harris's Hawk** (local escape). Other unusual birds were a Slavonian Grebe, a Short-eared Owl and four Garden Warblers.

Extra 2014 record: an immature **Chilean Flamingo** (escape) was photographed on Oakenholt marsh on Nov 28th, 2014 (DY). This was a **NEW species for the Reserve**, our previous record in 1988 being a Lesser Flamingo.

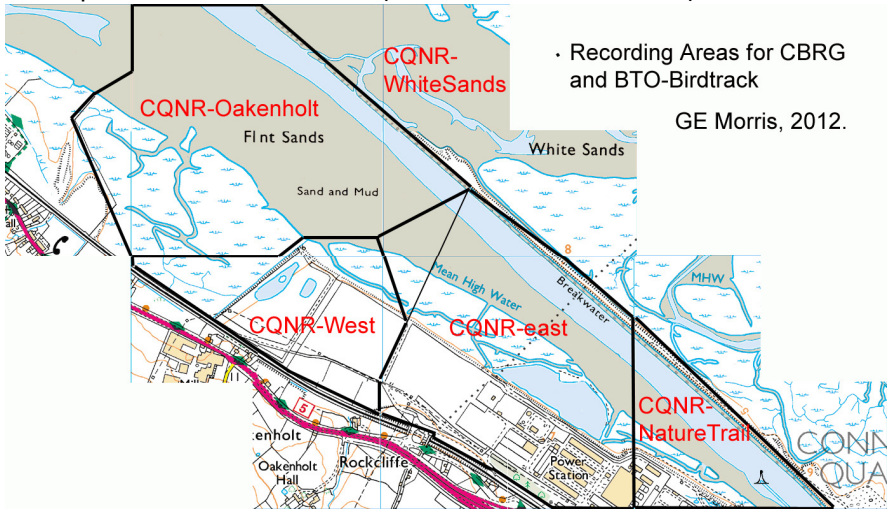
In these days of cheap (relatively) lightweight high-zoom cameras, there is little excuse for birders not making photographic records of unusual sightings for ID purposes. This practice is thankfully on the increase.

The Birds of Connah's Quay Nature Reserve and Oakenholt Marsh by Glenn Morris (order for £5 +P&P from glennmanc@hotmail.com)

A new 70-page paperback guide to all 233 species of bird seen on the Reserve over the past 40 years (9x6 inch with full colour cover photos). Reserve Map, a brief history of the Reserve and list of mammals.



Starting in 2012, we have been entering all DNS records into BTO's BirdTrack. This system is based on 1x1km squares, but these don't translate easily into obvious landscape features on the Reserve. The divisions shown below are a compromise between the exact km square boundaries and what are generally perceived as different areas of the estuary. Counts in the text are the sum of all four Reserve areas. Divisions are arbitrary since birds move with the changing tides and the south part of Oakenholt Marsh (within CQNR-west below) has few birds.



CQNR-Oakenholt includes all the “birdy” areas of Oakenholt Marsh as far back as the rows of fence posts and most of the mudflats visible from the West Hide as far as the revetment. **CQNR-West** includes the fly ash lagoon area, the papermill stream and its banks, the grazing fields west of the helipad road and the area of marsh just below and to the rear of the West Hide. **CQNR-East** includes the bunded pool area, the river between the helipad and the Field Study centre, the grazing field east of helipad road, the Rockcliffe woods and the most of the Power Station. **CQNR-Nature Trail** includes all the area east of the Field Study Centre, including the river around the wooden piles used by Cormorants and any activity above and beyond the revetment. West Hide records for across the river on Parkgate marshes are recorded under **CQNR-White Sands**.

THE SPECIES LIST FOR 2015.

Birds seen in less than 5 previous years on the Reserve are shown in **bold** face. Birds that nested this year as shown as **(B)**.

The tables show the **maximum count** for each month, except for raptors where the **total sightings** per month is shown.

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

A pair was present on the fly ash lagoon throughout the summer but there was no evidence of any young being raised this year. The largest flock was of 8 on the river on Nov 6th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	3	0	4	4	2	2	2	2	3	5	8	5

Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*) Escape.

Two or three birds could be seen from the West Hide between Nov 13th and 27th, but they were across the river on Burton Marsh (P&SH).

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)

One was present on Oakenholt Marsh on Nov 27th (P&SH), but the highest count of 10 on Jan 7th and the 3 on Oct 18th were from across the river (P&SH).

Tundra (Bewick's) Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*)

Only one record of three birds on the river on Nov 1st (P&SH, GR).

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

Although many of the highest counts in recent years were made from West Hide of birds across the river towards Denhall Lane or Burton Marsh, they are now regular in winter on Oakenholt Marsh (the exact location is not always clear from logbook records).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	1000	460	500	400	0	0	0	0	0	40	800	1000

White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*)

A bird of the Greenland race on Oakenholt Marsh on March 5th was the only record (P&SH).

Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)

Two on Jan 8th and Nov 22nd, 4 on Feb 8th and singles on Feb 22nd, May 28th, Jun 1st and Nov 15th.

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) (B)

At least one pair nested successfully again in the fly ash lagoon area this year. Fledged young (6) were first seen on May 12th (JH). Canada Geese can be seen on Oakenholt Marsh or the fly ash lagoon during most of the year. The highest count of 2,600 was on Nov 22nd (GEM).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	706	16	40	80	300	290	290	400	500	1500	2600	1600

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

Singles were recorded 9 times in winter, but a flock of 8 birds was present on Oakenholt Marsh between Dec 1st and 5th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	7	8

Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*)

Two were present on April 13th (EN)

Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*)

A "hybrid" was seen on Aug 29th (P&SH)

Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

No evidence of successful nesting this year. The highest logbook count of 1860 on Oakenholt Marsh was made during the summer moult on June 21st (GEM). On June 28th, there were 1000 on the marsh and another 1000 on the other side of the river (P&SH). These are by far the **highest numbers ever recorded** and the first to exceed 1000 birds.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	200	200	40	202	238	1860	1000	15	15	165	150	100

Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

A winter visitor to grassland around the fly ash lagoon and bunded pools, although 1 or 2 may be seen remaining into summer. Numbers this year were slightly higher than last year but still below average. The highest count of 640 was on Feb 24th (GEM).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	370	640	130	80	1	1	1	1	17	204	240	230

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)

There were 29 logbook records of 1-8 birds on the fly ash lagoon this year, including a pair in summer, but without further evidence of breeding. The highest counts of 8 were made during the March WeBS count (P&SH) and on April 29th (JR).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	2	4	8	8	6	2	2	0	2	0	1	3

Teal (*Anas crecca*)

These frequent the mudflats, lagoon and bunded pools for most of the year. The count of 6,000 on Oakenholt Marsh on Oct 27th (PDS) was the **highest count since 1989** (when 7,000 were recorded).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	169	174	81	58	0	0	3	60	300	6000	4000	180

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

No evidence of successful breeding this year. The highest numbers usually arrive for the summer moult, like the Shelduck, and the highest count this year was 528 on June 21st (GEM), which is about average for recent years.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	46	140	16	31	102	528	450	422	10	100	107	47

Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

This sporadic winter visitor is usually seen on the river from West Hide, sometimes in very large numbers, but rarely staying long. The highest count of 5000 on Oct 27th (PDS) was also the final record of the year. The average maximum over the previous 30 years was 3,250.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	60	8	180	0	0	0	24	1750	5000	0	0

Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

There were occasionally good numbers on the fly ash lagoon in both winters with 25 on Jan 10th and 20 on Christmas Eve (both P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	25	2	8	4	0	0	0	0	6	2	18	20

Pochard (*Aythya farina*).

This species is only an occasional visitor to the Reserve. A male on the fly ash lagoon on Nov 4th (GEM, P&SH) is the only record this year.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) **(B)**

All records are from the fly ash lagoon, where one pair bred successfully this year. The highest count of 16 on July 18th was of a male, 3 females and 14 chicks (P&SH). 12 chicks were seen on the 19th, 11 on the 24th and only 6 on Aug 2nd. Since it began in 1997, nesting has occurred in only 8 of the 19 years.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	4	12	13	3	8	16	7	0	0	11	4

Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

Three females on the bunded pool on Feb 22nd was the only record this year (P&SH).

Redbreasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*)

Two males were present on the bunded pools on Feb 21st (PDS) and one remained on Feb 22nd (P&SH).

Red-throated Diver (*Gavia stellata*)

One was seen from the West Hide on Dec 13th (P&SH).

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)

There were 8 records in the first 4 months of the year, with a high count of 7 on Jan 7th (P&SH). The increasing frequency of this species continues.

Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Non-breeders are present for most of the year. They usually frequent the river edge and the Nature Trail groynes, but also fish regularly on the bunded pools. The highest count within the Reserve this year was 71 on Oct 27th, a count which included 28 on the Nature Trail groynes (GEM). 140 on Jan 10th were recorded on Neston Marsh across the river (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	(140)	15	46	21	8	14	35	27	60	71	24	25

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

This species nests at Burton across the estuary and can be found throughout the year on Oakenholt Marsh and the bunded pools, where sizeable post-breeding numbers congregate in autumn. The highest count was 41 on July 12th, 39 of which were on the bunded pools (GEM).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	1	3	4	6	3	30	41	18	10	12	13	2

Great White Egret (*Ardea alba*)

All records this year were once again of birds across the river on Burton Marsh or White Sands with a maximum of 3 on Sep 29th (P&SH). There were 3 records in Jan/Feb and 10 records during Aug-Dec.

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

This species is found all year round, but numbers were not very high this year, with a maximum of 11 on Sep 25th (GEM).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	1	2	1	1	2	3	6	4	11	4	3	3

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) **(B)**

Two broods may have been raised again on the fly ash lagoon this year; 2 chicks were first seen on June 23rd and another 2 chicks on Aug 10th (P&SH). Once again, there was a preference for the bunded pools during Oct-Dec, with 10 present there on both Nov 1st (PDS) and Nov 7th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	6	2	7	6	5	4	4	7	6	9	10	5

Slavonian Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*)

A single on the river was seen from the Middle Hide on Feb 22nd (www.deeestuary.co.uk, no logbook record). This is only the 6th Reserve record and the first since 2002.

Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

Only 13 records this year, with a maximum count of 6 on June 1st (P&SH). They are almost invariably brought up the river by high tides.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	2	1	2	4	4	6	1	0	1	1	1	2

Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)

Many sightings during the autumn passage of juveniles this year. Not all of these were from the marsh across the river, since there were several sightings over the fly ash lagoons, the bunded pools and the revetment.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sightings	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	13	8	3	1

Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)

The improvement in sightings of this species continued with 12 records of single ringtails during the year. Although most of the records were from across the river, one was recorded flying up-river from the bunded pool hides on Nov 13th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sightings	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	5

Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)

Absent during the breeding season, but another good year with 25 birds recorded altogether, all singles apart from both male and female seen on Sep 9th in the bunded pool area.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sightings	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	8	5	3	3

Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)

The maximum count was of 6 in the air together on Apr 2nd (GEM) and a pair were displaying in the Rockcliffe area on Mar 19th (GEM). The total of 70 birds recorded during the year was beaten only once by 73 in 2012.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sightings	1	2	8	24	6	6	3	8	8	6	1	1

Harris's Hawk (*Parabuteo unicinctus*) Escape. **NEW BIRD**

A local falconer's bird with jesses on Nov 13th (P&SH, RB, SS).

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

Only 15 birds recorded this year, mostly in the autumn.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sightings	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	1	3	2	2	1

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

A very much better year with 19 birds recorded altogether (17 singles and one record of 2 birds). Although 7 of these birds were seen across the river on Burton Marsh, even 12 records would make it the best year since 2009 and the second best since 1989.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sightings	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	1	4

Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)

Singles were seen on July 20th (B&MJ) and on Sep 10th and Sep 13th (P&SH).

Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*)

After the loss of the whole family from the Power Station nestbox last summer, summer sightings were lower than usual, but total numbers kept up well. No nesting attempt was made this year, though an adult and a juvenile were seen together on a West Hide pylon on Aug 10th (P&SH). A female caught a moorhen on the fly ash lagoon on Feb 25th and was watched eating it (GP, PH). There were two other records of a peregrine with unidentified kill. The records show the post-breeding peak typical of most raptor species.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sightings	9	5	0	1	1	1	4	16	7	14	4	4

Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) **(B)**

Nested successfully on the fly ash lagoon, where adults feeding young were first seen on July 7th (GEM). The highest count of 30 was made during the WeBS count on July 19th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	3	2	12	12	6	6	30	0	13	19	8	14

Coot (*Fulica atra*) (B)

Always present on the fly ash lagoon (where at least 2 pairs nest) with larger numbers in winter. The highest count was 60 on Jan 10th (P&SH). Chicks were first seen on May 6th, but there was another record of a pair with 3 chicks on June 28th (both P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	60	50	40	20	19	25	45	0	40	40	30	40

Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)

Three birds, including 2 juveniles, were present along the river from Jun 28th to Jul 19th (many obs). There were also 3 on Mar 11th (P&SH), 2 on Aug 1st (JdA) and **a record count of 6** on Sep 28th (HH).

Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) (B)

At least 2 pairs appear to have nested successfully, one on the fly ash lagoon raised 1 chick and one on the bunded pools raised 3 chicks. Chicks were first seen on the lagoon on May 29th (JR) and on June 16th on the bunded pools (P&SH). The highest count was a modest 1000 on Oct 27th (PDS, GR).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	204	84	46	102	73	300	57	300	301	1000	516	400

Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

Up to 36 birds were seen on the Marsh during Jan 7th-10th (P&SH, PDS, N&PH); this flock was the largest since 1993. There was another count of 26 on Nov 27th (P&SH) and a single on Oct 27th (GR).

Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

A very good year with 12 records of up to 6 birds during the first 4 months (max. 6 on Feb 1st (P&SH). Two were seen on Aug 14th and 16th (P&SH) and there were 8 more records of 1-3 birds in Oct-Dec.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	5	6	4	1	0	0	0	2	0	3	2	2

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

No evidence of nesting, but large numbers on the mudflats and (sometimes) the grazing fields in winter. The highest count of 2000 was made on Jan 7th (N&PH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	2000	510	0	2	0	90	180	110	230	500	1000	1500

Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)

The first record was a single on the bunded pools on Mar 29th (P&SH), followed by 18 records of 1-2 birds on the fly ash lagoon between Apr 10th and Jul 16th, but still no evidence of attempted breeding. The birds usually show well from the West Hide, walking along the water's edge.



Photo:GEM

Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)

There was a good passage in August with a high count of 63 on the 27th (P&SH) and another count of 50 on Sep 2nd (PDS).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	63	50	1	0	0

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

Eleven spring records between Apr 15th and May 19th with maxima of 7 on May 3rd (Anon), 5 on May 6th (P&SH) and 6 on May 8th (GR). Five were seen on July 24th (P&SH) and 11 records of 1-2 birds, July 10th - Aug 28th.

Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)

Present throughout the year and throughout the Reserve, including the grazing fields. There always seems to be one single bird on the bunded pools.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	77	53	72	54	50	24	31	200	122	83	81	79

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Numbers continued to recover from the poor showing in the 2013/14 winter and seemed fully-recovered by late 2015 with a high count of 3,500 on Nov 26th (PDS), though sometimes completely absent in winter. One bird on Sep 29th (P&SH) had been ringed at Strangford Loch in 2010 and is a regular visitor to the Dee. This has long been the flagship bird for the Reserve with numbers of international importance.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	770	2	686	640	100	3	6	900	1500	2000	3500	1000

Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*)

Two winter records of a bird on Jan 10th (PDS) and 2 on Jan 11th (GP) were followed by a late spring passage of 1 on May 19th and 3 on June 1st (both P&SH).

Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*)

There were singles on Aug 16th, Aug 27th and Nov 1st (all P&SH) and Sep 12th (PDS).

Knot (*Calidris canutus*)

Knot numbers remained low this year with a maximum of only 190 on Mar 19th (GEM) – (2000+ occurred in most years this century). They often flock with the godwits.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	1	1	190	65	0	0	1	8	8	60	100	100

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

Two winter birds (ruff and reeve) were seen on Feb 21st (PDS). A single was present from Aug 10th-22nd and another on Sep 13th.

Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*)

Two juveniles on Sep 2nd and singles on Sep 3rd and 12th (PDS, P&SH).

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

Rather irregular in winter, but when present, numbers can be very large. The highest logbook count was 4,050 on Jan 6th (PDS), but there was also a count of 7500 on www.deeestuary.co.uk on Jan 23rd.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	7500	2500	200	25	60	0	5	5	700	1200	3000	3000

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)

A single was seen on Sep 12th (PDS) and 13th (JdA).

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

On passage, there were 6 spring singles between Apr 20th and May 15th and a healthy 22 records of 1-3 birds between Jul 11th and Sep 15th.



Photo:GEM

Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*).

Only one record: a single on Oct 26th (P&SH).

Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*)

This is one of the specialities of the Reserve with significant numbers both on autumn passage and overwintering. The highest count this year of 25 was on the Reserve Open Day on Oct 25th (GEM), but winter numbers were also good with 9 present on Jan 7th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	9	8	5	2	0	1	7	15	17	25	14	2

Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)

Another Reserve speciality, which frequents the bunded pools like the previous species. Autumn numbers were a little below average with a maximum of 17 on both Aug 28th (P&SH) and Sep 25th (GEM), but winter numbers were very healthy.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	6	7	6	5	1	1	9	17	17	11	9	7

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)

Redshank numbers increase from late July onwards with the largest passage numbers gathering on the bunded pools at high tide. The highest count was 3,000 on Aug 20th (RWE). A pair were displaying and copulating as early as Jan 4th (P&SH), but there was no further evidence of attempted breeding.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	96	200	710	127	2	90	388	3000	1500	2225	2200	300

Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)

An extraordinary year for this species with 19 records from the bunded pools from Jan 1st to Apr 2nd including 4 counts of over 20 birds and a maximum of 31 on Jan 26th (AN). This was more than double the previous maximum of 14 in 2010 and 1984. They returned for the following winter with a high count of 24 on Dec 8th (P&SH) and 10 counts reaching double figures after Oct 21st.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	31	26	12	1	0	0	0	0	1	10	16	24

Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*)

On Feb 21st, there was a logbook record of 2 birds (PDS) and 3 (**a Reserve record number**) shown by www.deeestuary.co.uk on the same day.

Guillemot (*Uria aalge*)

One was seen on the river on the high tides of both Feb 1st and Oct 26th (P&SH).

Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*)

Four were seen from the West Hide on May 6th (P&SH).

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

The first record of 2 over the river was rather late on Apr 28th (GEM) and the last was on Aug 14th. The highest count was 100 on July 24th (GR).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	0	0	7	60	41	100	8	0	0	0	0

Blackheaded Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

Counts are not made systematically, except on WeBS counts, but there is a distinct post-breeding peak in July/Aug with numbers dwindling slowly thereafter. The high count of 600 is from the WeBS count of Nov 15th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	92	50	41	12	62	200	205	120	10	40	600	200

Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*)

A single was recorded from the bunded pool hides on Jun 29th (EM).

Common Gull (*Larus canus*)

Surprisingly uncommon on the Reserve, though they roost elsewhere on the estuary during the winter and are often seen at Flint Castle. They are sometimes found on the Reserve during bad weather in the hills.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	10	4	0

Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) **NEW BIRD**

One was seen on Oakenholt Marsh on Aug 29th (SS, P&SH, TL), having been reported on Birdguides the day before. This is a new bird for the Reserve, since two previous records were probably outside the Reserve boundaries.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)

The most common of the larger gulls on the Reserve and present all year.

One seems especially fond of feeding on crabs from the bunded pools.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	70	46	0	21	30	40	40	5	2	40	40	87

Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*)

Records of singles on the bunded pool on Mar 8th (P&SH), Mar 29th (DP), June 25th (AN) and Sep 15th (JdA).

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

Less common than Lesser Black-backed among roosting flocks, though it may be equally common flying over.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	0	0	1	1	1	8	7	0	10	6	0

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)

Non-breeders are present most of the year, with large winter numbers.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	30	6	0	7	2	0	8	2	4	6	50	46

Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*)

Large flocks were seen several times on the grazing fields in Jan/Feb, including large flocks of 77 on Feb 11th (www.deeestuary.co.uk) and of 102 on Feb 15th (PDS). This was by far the highest count for the Reserve and such large flocks have not been seen since the 1980s. A couple of birds often frequent the bird feeders during the summer.

Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)

Present all year in small numbers. The record count of 120 on Nov 11th was of birds flying by the Papermill near the railway line (P&SH).

Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

There was a very notable record of a bird hunting along the riverside marsh near the helipad in the late afternoon of Nov 11th (JH). Not seen on the Reserve for over 10 years.

Swift (*Apus apus*)

The first record was on May 6th and the maximum count was 300 on May 10th (P&SH). The last record was on Aug 2nd (GEM).

Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

These reserve favourites returned to their breeding grounds after Feb 12th and then came back on Aug 14th. There were 42 records altogether, including one of 2 birds together on the Field Study Centre pool on Oct 13th (SD), October being the peak month with 10 records.

Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*)
Only one record on July 19th (P&SH).

Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*)
Recorded in all months from June onwards, 15 records altogether of 1-2 birds, both adults and juveniles, mainly from Rockcliffe and the feeders.

*[Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos minor*)
There was a logbook record of this local rarity on Aug 14th, but the observers have not been identified and a description is required.]*

Magpie (*Pica pica*) **(B)**
The highest count was 13 on Jan 9th (RB). Fledged young on May 28th (GEM) suggests successful breeding.

Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)
There were records on Jan 8th (2), Apr 8th (1) and June 11th (1).

Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)
Recorded in most months with a high count of 145 on Jan 19th (PDS).
Attracted to the grazing fields in summer, they are also found with crows on the marsh.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	145	0	2	22	0	1	0	0	45	0	0	0

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)
There were 4 records of singles in May, June, August and October.

Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*)
Numerous on marsh, mudflats and grazing fields with peak numbers in the summer, though the maximum count of 200 was on Jan 28th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	200	0	24	13	40	60	10	8	10	29	7	24

Raven (*Corvus corax*)
There were 9 records and the highest count was of 5 on July 18th (P&SH)

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)

This species is becoming more frequently reported. There were 13 records this year, mainly from Rockcliffe, including a male singing until June 21st. There was a record count of 5 birds on Feb 2nd (PDS).

Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)

The main occupant of Reserve nest-boxes, the highest count was of 12 on July 26th (P&SH). Evidence of breeding was not recorded in the logbooks this year.

Great Tit (*Parus major*)

Another common nesting species with a maximum count of 6 on Apr 8th (GEM), but singing males were the only evidence of nesting recorded.

Coal Tit (*Parus ater*)

Becoming more common, a male in song was present at Rockcliffe on Apr 28th (GEM), but most of the 7 records were outside the nesting season.

Willow Tit (*Poecile montana*) NEW BIRD

A bird was reported in the bushes near the helipad on Sep 20th and a description submitted (DEW). This is the first Reserve record.

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

Only one record of a singing male this year on Mar 19th (KJ-BH), but 1-3 birds wintering from Oct 27th onwards.

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)

The highest counts were of 40 on May 18th, Jun 1st and 21st. First and last dates were Apr 6th and Sep 10th (both P&SH).

Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

The highest count this year was 100 on Apr 16th (RB). First and last dates were Apr 4th (PDS) and Sep 10th (P&SH).

House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*)

The highest count on passage was of 50 birds on Aug 7th (P&SH). First and last dates were Apr 6th and Sep 10th (both P&SH).

Longtailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*)

Only 6 records this year from Jan, Mar, Apr, June and Nov, with a high count of 12 on Nov 6th (P&SH).

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

The first record was on Mar 19th (GEM) and the last on Sep 29th (P&SH), with a high count of 8 passage birds on Jul 10th (P&SH). No proof of breeding this year.

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

Only two records: 3 singing males near the West hide on Apr 16th (GEM) and then 6 on return passage on July 10th (P&SH), the most since 1983.

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*) **(B)**

The first record was on Apr 8th and the last on Sep 9th (GEM). Breeding was proven this year, a pair with 2 young being seen on Aug 7th (P&SH).

Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*)

Three birds in the bushes around the bunded pool on May 3rd (PDM) was the greatest number recorded on the Reserve. Also a single on May 1st (www.deeestuary.co.uk). **These were only the 4th Reserve records.**

Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*)

The first record of a singing male was on April 28th (GEM), but the highest count of 4 was during autumn passage on July 26th (P&SH). There were 8 records with the last on Sep 1st (P&SH).

Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*) **(B)**

The maximum count of 6 on Jun 21st included newly-fledged young (GEM) and it is likely that 2-3 pairs nested. First and last dates were Apr 23rd (KL-J) and Sep 1st (P&SH).

Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

Between May 10th and July 14th, there were 4 records of singles and one record of a pair (all P&SH).

Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*)

Only one record of a single on June 11th (P&SH).

Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*)

Only one winter record of a single bird in the Rockcliffe woods on Feb 2nd (PDS).

Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

A common resident. The maximum count of 4 this year was on July 3rd (GEM).

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

They are often seen on grazing fields with outside the breeding season.

The highest count of 650 was recorded on July 3rd (PDS).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	1	0	0	0	0	300	650	50	200	350	30	200

Blackbird (*Turdus merula*) **(B)**

Nest building on Apr 2nd is the only recorded evidence of successful breeding (GEM). The highest count was 12 on both Mar 19th (GEM) and Aug 7th (P&SH).

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)

The last record of the winter was 9 birds on Apr 5th (PDS) and they re-appeared on Nov 19th. The highest count was 100 along the revetment on Jan 7th (P&SH) and there were 8 records during the year.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)

The highest count was of 10 birds on Oct 30th (P&SH). There were 7 records during the year.

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)

The highest counts were of 5 birds on Jan 18th and 4 birds on Nov 4th and 22nd. In spring, there was a singing male in the Rockcliffe area from April 2nd to June 21st, so breeding was possible.

Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*)

Single birds recorded on 5 occasions from June to December and no evidence of breeding.

Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) **(B)**

A common resident. Recorded throughout the year, there was a high count of 9 on Apr 28th and a pair was seen with 2 juveniles on Aug 7th (P&SH).

Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

After a male on Apr 16th (GEM) and a female on Apr 30th (P&SH), there was a male near the entrance between Aug 2nd and Sep 9th (SS, P&SH, GEM).



Photo: GEM

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)

There was a male near the West Hide on Apr 20th (P&SH) and two birds there on Apr 30th (KL-J). Another was seen on Sep 13th.

Stonechat (*Saxicola torquatus*)

There were winter records of 2 on Jan 4th (P&SH) and then 4 records of a female or a pair between Mar 8th and 12th (RB, P&SH). The last record was a single on Oct 11th (P&SH).

Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

The first record was a single on Mar 22nd (P&SH), the same date as last year, and the highest spring counts were 17 on Apr 15th (SS) and 16 on Apr 28th, including male photographed carrying nesting material on the Nature Trail marshes (GEM). A poor autumn with only 6 singles between July 19th and Oct 3rd, but a total of 28 records during the year.

Dunnock (**B?**) (*Prunella modularis*)

This common resident was recorded in every month of the year with males in song from Apr to June. The highest count was 7 on Nov 4th.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Only 6 records, 5 of which were post-breeders in July/early Aug. The highest count was 10 on July 10th (P&SH).

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava flavissima*)

Two birds in spring on Apr 21st/22nd (LJ, RB) and one in autumn perched on the barbed wire fence on Sep 25th (GEM).

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)

There were 2 winter singles on Feb 13th and Nov 12th (both PDS) and 6 records of 1-2 birds between Sep 10th and Oct 27th (P&SH, PDS, RB, GR).

Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*) (**B**)

Breeding was confirmed by fledged young on the fly ash lagoon on Jul 3rd and on the Nature Trail on Jul 12th (GEM). There was a high count of 30 near the West Hide on Jan 7th (N&PH).

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba alba*).

There were singles on Apr 28th (P&SH) and Aug 17th (PDS) and 2 birds on Sep 11th (P&SH).

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)

The highest count was 12 birds in 2 flocks on Sep 10th (P&SH). There were 21 records of 1-8 birds during Mar-Apr and Jul-Nov. No breeding season records.

Rock Pipit (*Anthus petrosus*)

This species is usually recorded on the rocks around the West Hide in winter. On Jan 23rd, there were 4 and on Feb 22nd, there were 2 plus another 6 on the bunded pools (P&SH). There were 10 Oct-Dec records of 1-4 birds (all P&SH, PDS, SS, GR).

Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*)

One record from the West Hide on Nov 29th (P&SH).

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

The largest winter flocks were of 50 birds on Jan 7th (P&SH) and 30 on Dec 11th (TL). There was no evidence of breeding, apart from singing males.

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

The only record this year was of a bird near the feeders on Dec 29th (BC).

Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) **(B)**

Recorded only in the Rockcliffe area, the highest count was of 6 birds on Nov 19th (P&SH). Pairs were present in the Rockcliffe area until Apr 4th but there were no May-July records

Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*) **(B)**

The largest flock was of 50 birds on July 12th (P&SH). The only evidence of breeding was a singing male on Jun 21st (GEM). They are seen on the feeders in winter.

Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*) **(B)**

Evidence of breeding was an adult feeding young on July 7th (GEM). The largest flocks were of 95 on Jan 10th (PDS) and 100+ on Sep 9th (GEM) and Oct 27th (GR).

Twite (*Carduelis flavirostris*)

A very successful programme of observation and ringing in support of the Welsh Twite Recovery Project is continuing on the Reserve (RB). A winter flock of up to 150 birds (on Feb 8th, SS) was present around the West Hide regularly until Mar 29th. Three birds were reported on Sep 17th (NL, EB, AL) and the flock had reached 132 by Dec 22nd (RB).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	130	150	136	80	0	0	0	0	3	62	80	132

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) (B)

Recently-fledged young were seen on Aug 2nd, suggesting breeding on or near the Reserve. The largest post-breeding flock was of 150 birds on Sep 29th (P&SH).

Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

The maximum count of 6 was on Oct 30th (P&SH). No direct evidence of breeding, although there were summer records from suitable habitat around the fly ash lagoon..

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	2	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	6	2	1

Mammals:

Fox: One record of 3 on Jan 13th and singles on Jun 7th, 11th, 28th, July 7th, Aug 14th and Dec 21st (dead) and 24th (alive).

Stoat: Singles on Jan 1st and Jun 21st.

Brown Rat: One on Feb 19th and a family of 1 and adult and 2 young on July 3rd (GEM). They nest in holes near the bird feeders.

Grey Seal: One in the river on Jan 8th (PDS).

There was also an interesting record of 1000 Garden Chafer on June 7th (P&SH)

Contributors

This report is based mainly on logbook records from the five hides on the Reserve, but other sources of information include RSPB counts for Oakenholt Marsh, WeBS high tide wildfowl and wader counts, BTO BirdTrack surveys and website for “Dee Estuary Birding”.

All logbook records with a legible observer name are valuable and are submitted to BTO Birdtrack with the observer name. The names below are given to show who takes responsibility for some for the more unusual counts or sightings, so that queries can be directed to them.

Joe d’Arcy (JdA)	Richard Beckett (RB)
E Blackhurst (EB)	B Carthy (BC)
S Deane (SD)	RW Evans (RWE)
H Hall (HH)	N and P Hallas (N&PH)
Peter & Sue Haslem (P&SH)	
Joan Hotchkiss (JH)	Phil Hotchkiss (PH)
A Leach (AL)	
Keith Lloyd-Jones (KL-J)	Keith Lloyd-Jones & Bob Hayes (KJ, BH)
L Jones (LJ)	B and M Jones (B&MJ)
N Lewis (NL)	T Lovatt (TL)
E Monteith (EM)	Glenn E Morris (GEM)
PD Murphy (PDM)	A Nevitt (AN)
E Nixon (EN)	D Peate (DP)
Giles Pepler (GP)	Geoff Robinson (GR)
J Rogers (JR)	PD Shenton (PDS)
S Skelton (SS)	DE Wright (DEW)
Doug Yates (DY)	

Butterfly Report 2015

As there was a great deal of work being carried out on the Nature Trail and large areas had been cleared it was decided not to carry out any butterfly monitoring on this area this year. However, three new transects were set up covering the road from the Field Study Centre to the Helipad and also the Rockcliffe path ("Gardener's compound) alongside the access road to the reserve. This particular transect proved to be good for butterflies having open meadow areas, and shrubs and trees that gave protection from the wind. The Wetland Meadow area was monitored as usual.

Over the two areas 20 species of butterfly were recorded between April and September although, compared to 2014 numbers of Small Tortoiseshell, Meadow Brown, Gatekeepers and Peacocks were significantly lower.

The following were recorded: Small Tortoiseshell, Green Veined White, Peacock, Comma, Large White, Orange Tip, Speckled Wood, Small White, Wall, Large Skipper, Holly Blue, Brimstone, Common Blue, Red Admiral, Meadow Brown, Small Skipper, Painted Lady, Gatekeeper, Small Heath and Small Copper.

A big 'Thank You' to all the recorders for their time in recording the butterflies this year.

More recorders are needed!

Anyone willing to give a couple of hours a month between April and September to carry out this important work please contact me by e mail: c.hamer21@btinternet.com or 'phone 01352716273.

Monitoring is usually done between 11am and 3pm on warm (13°C or above), sunny days and each area takes approximately 45 minutes depending on how many butterflies there are. Help and guidance can be given.

All the records are sent to Butterfly Conservation.