

DEESIDE NATURALISTS SOCIETY BIRD REPORT, 2016

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

By: Glenn Morris, March, 2017.

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



Great White Egret and Little Egret on the bunded pool (photo: GEM)

The bird species list for the Connah's Quay Reserve (inc. RSPB Oakenholt Marsh) has now reached over 233 in over 40 years of bird recording, although this total does include about 16 that are likely or definite escapes from captivity.

This year 141 species were recorded: Two new species were a **Little Auk** floating on the bunded pool and a **White-winged Black Tern** over the fly ash lagoon. Other notable events included close views of a Great White Egret on the bunded pools and of a Great Skua on the fly ash lagoon. Other rarely-seen birds included a Barn Owl and a distant Cuckoo.

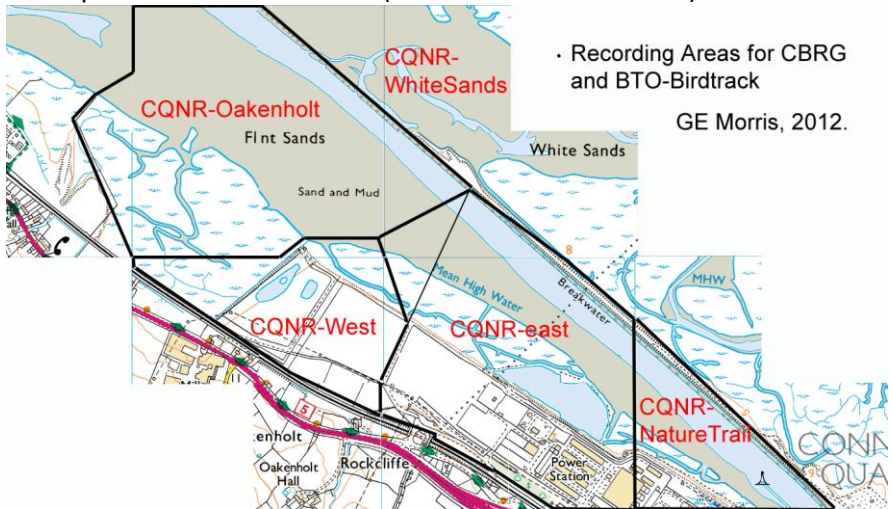
In these days of cheap (relatively) lightweight high-zoom cameras, there is little excuse for birders not making photographic records of unusual sightings for ID purposes. This practice is thankfully on the increase.

The Birds of Connah's Quay Nature Reserve and Oakenholt Marsh by Glenn Morris (order for £5 inc 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 2016.

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*) **(B)**

A pair on the fly ash lagoon raised 4 young first seen on May 27th. One disappeared between Jul 7th and 10th. Two more disappeared between Jul 31st and Aug 8th. The largest flock was of 7 on Jan 12th (GEM).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	7	2	2	4	6	6	6	3	2	6	2	2

Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*) Escape.

Four birds were seen across the river on Burton Marsh on both Jan 22nd and Oct 21st, but one came close to the West Hide on Dec 3rd (all P&SH).

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)

Once again the highest count of 20 on Feb 24th was from across the river behind the revetment (GEM). In addition, 4 were seen in flight above the revetment from the Nature Trail on Feb 20th (GEM) and there was a single on the river on Mar 4th (P&SH).

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

The massive count of 8,500 on Feb 29th was of birds on the Welsh side (mainly) of Burton and Parkgate marshes, across the river from West Hide (CW, P&SH), although 220 were on Oakenholt Marsh on Jan 28th. At the end of the year, birds came more frequently to Oakenholt and the count of 2,335 on Dec 12th was the highest count yet for birds on the Reserve itself (RB). Wintering birds had left by Mar 20th and were not seen again until Oct 29th, apart from a stray single on Aug 14th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	2000	8500	3000	0	0	0	0	1	0	120	200	2335

White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*)

A bird of the Greenland race was recorded four times across the river between Feb 1st and 19th (P&SH, TL, RB).

Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)

There were 14 records from Oakenholt Marsh this year in Jan, Jun and Sep-Dec with a maximum of 5 on Feb 4th (P&SH).

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

Although present throughout the year, there was no proof of successful breeding recorded this year. Canada Geese can be seen on Oakenholt Marsh or the fly ash lagoon during most of the year. The highest count of 3,000 on Oakenholt Marsh was on Dec 21st (GP).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	1020	1000	300	26	200	250	432	600	1900	2000	650	3000

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

There were an amazing 53 records of this species, with 1-3 birds seen nearly every month during Jan-Aug, but then a flock of 27 was seen on Sep 3rd (PDS) and flocks of 22-40 were seen 13 times from Nov 2nd to the end of the year (P&SH, SS, GP). Previously, recent sightings of the estuary of small numbers were regarded as likely escapes, but only wild birds, or birds from the resident UK feral populations, are likely on this scale.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	3	2	1	0	1	1	2	2	27	12	27	40

Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla*)

A single of the light-bellied form was present on Oakenholt Marsh between Jan 29th and Feb 5th (P&SH, PDS) and 4 were seen across the river on Feb 25th (P&SH).

Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*)

A "hybrid" was present between Jun 23rd and Aug 17th (P&SH)

Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) (B)

Recently-fledged young were seen on Oakenholt Marsh on June 23rd and Jul 10th (P&SH). The highest logbook count of 1000 on Oakenholt Marsh was made during the summer moult on both Jun 20th and Jul 24th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	320	260	320	150	396	1000	1000	400	40	250	57	40

Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

A winter visitor to grassland around the fly ash lagoon and bunded pools, but 3-5 remained into summer, a few more than usual. Numbers were quite low in the 2015-16 winter, but recovered for the 2016-17 winter. The highest count of 4190 was on Dec 18th (P&SH) and is a record number for the Reserve, beating the previous record of 3250 in 1987.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	260	400	477	61	8	4	5	10	105	980	1200	4190

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)

There were 15 logbook records of 1-9 birds on the fly ash lagoon this year, but there was no evidence of breeding. The highest count of 9 was made on Mar 28th (P&SH).

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

Teal (*Anas crecca*)

These frequent the mudflats, lagoon and bunded pools for most of the year. The highest count of 1020 was on Sep 18th (P&SH). This is about average if we don't include the bumper years with huge numbers, such as 6000 in 2015 and 3000 in 2014.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	560	325	244	62	1	40	20	171	1020	942	950	732

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) (B)

Breeding was proven this year when a female with 8 chicks was seen on the fly-ash lagoon on Jun 17th (P&SH). The highest numbers usually arrive for the summer moult and the highest count this year was 835 on Aug 21st (P&SH); about average for recent years.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	80	55	19	8	200	400	600	835	200	101	206	126

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 was of 504 on Oct 30th (P&SH), well below average (though they may have visited when no-one was looking!).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	4	0	100	220	4	0	0	40	120	504	0	2

Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

Fewer than last year on the fly ash lagoon with a maximum of 20 on both Jan 10th and Nov 13th (P&SH). There were 20 logbook records.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	20	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	6	9	20	12

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	10	12	13	3	8	16	7	4	4	11	4

Scaup (*Aythya marila*)

Three were seen on the river on Feb 21st and a single on Oct 2nd (both P&SH).

Common Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*)

A good year with 4 records of singles on the river with the rising tide between Jan 21st and Feb 22nd (SS, PDS, P&SH, TL)

Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

Only one record: a female on the river on Feb 2nd (PDS).

Redbreasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*)

Two were present on the bunded pools on Jun 5th (P&SH) and Nov 16th (R&GR).

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)

Seven redheads appeared on Aug 20th and another single was seen from the West Hide on Dec 2nd (both P&SH).

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)

Only two records this year of singles on Mar 20th and Oct 23rd (P&SH).

Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

The highest count of 50 was on Nov 13th on Oakenholt Marsh at high tide (P&SH). There are usually 20-30 birds at this time of year on the groynes in the river opposite the Nature Trail; the highest count there was 40 on Feb 24th (GEM).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	34	48	36	20	12	6	32	35	11	24	50	40

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 43 on Sep 16th on the bunded pools (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	4	9	11	10	2	6	25	22	43	14	5	4

Great White Egret (*Ardea alba*)

One visited the bunded pool daily between Nov 10th and 13th and there are records from Oakenholt Marsh on Sep 21st, Nov 3rd and Nov 23rd (many obs.) The highest counts were once again of birds across the river on Burton Marsh or White Sands with 6 on Oct 30th and a record 12 on Nov 2nd (P&SH).

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

This species is found all year round, and winter numbers were a little higher this year, with a maximum of 14 on Oct 9th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	11	9	3	2	4	4	6	8	8	14	12	3

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) (B)

Three broods may have been raised on the fly ash lagoon this year; 2 chicks were first seen on June 23rd with another 2 chicks on Jun 28th and a 3rd brood on Aug 19th (P&SH). Once again, there was a preference for the bunded pools during Oct-Dec, with 16 present there on Dec 2nd (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	5	5	5	7	4	6	8	4	8	14	11	16

Slavonian Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*)

A single was seen again on the river on Feb 20th and 21st (P&SH), almost exactly the same day as last year's on Feb 22nd. This was the 7th Reserve record.

Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

There were 25 records this year, with a maximum count of 8 on Oct 16th (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	4	1	2	2	5	1	1	2	8	4	2

Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)

Sightings continue to increase, especially during the autumn passage of juveniles in Aug-Sep, when 3 birds were seen together on 3 occasions. Most records were from the marsh across the river, but there were a few sightings over the fly ash lagoon and the revetment. On Jul 24th, one caught a duck and ate it in front of the West Hide (P&SH). This is the first time that the species has been seen throughout the winter months; indeed, it was recorded in almost every month of the year and there were 58 records, compared with only 5 records in 2013.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sightings	3	3	2	0	1	1	8	15	15	2	1	3

Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)

The fortunes of this species also continue to improve with 15 records, including 3 of males and one record of a male and female together. Although many of the records were from across the river, four of them were from the bunded pool hides. It has been over 20 years since they were seen so often on the Reserve.

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



Photo: Hazel Rothwell

Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)

Only 17 birds recorded compared with 25 birds last year, but there were 4 sightings during the breeding season.

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

Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)

The maximum counts were of 4 in the air together on Mar 16th (RR) and Mar 20th (P&SH), when birds are displaying at the start of the nesting season. The total of 70 birds recorded during the year was the same as last year.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sightings	2	3	13	0	3	2	4	7	10	19	7	0

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

There were 28 sightings this year, but only one of 2 birds together. Once again, most records were during the autumn passage.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sightings	1	1	1	0	1	0	2	10	9	0	2	0

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

The improving trend continues with 24 sightings altogether (22 singles and one record of 2 birds), though these may relate to only 2 individuals. Only 3 of these sightings were from across the river on Burton Marsh, so 21 records on the Reserve itself (including the revetment) is the most since 1989. On Nov 23rd, a female and juvenile were sitting side-by-side on the fence near West Hide. The adult flew off towards Burton and returned with prey, which it fed to the young bird (SS).

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

Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)

There were 5 records in July and August this year, though 3 of these were from across the river. One was seen following a Marsh Harrier near the West Hide on Aug 8th (PDS) and two were seen together over the Marsh on Aug 20th, one of them eating a bird in flight (P&SH).

Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*)

No nesting attempt was made this year, though two were seen together over the revetment on May 8th (P&SH), the only summer record. One made an unsuccessful pass at a Twite on Mar 18th (RB). There was one

other record of a peregrine with unidentified kill. The sightings show the post-breeding peak typical of most raptor species.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sightings	2	2	4	1	2	0	6	15	11	2	3	4

Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)

There were no records of confirmed breeding this year, though birds are always present on the fly-ash lagoon and a single was usually present on the Study Centre pool.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	6	12	8	14	6	4	6	5	4	7	15	17

Coot (*Fulica atra*) **(B)**

Chicks were first seen on the fly-ash lagoon on Apr 29th (P&SH) and there was another record of a pair with 8 chicks on May 24th (P&SP). The highest count was 50 on Aug 28th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	35	30	42	13	17	27	40	50	40	40	40	40

Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)

There were 4 records in spring and summer with a maximum of 5 on Jun 29th (P&SH), probably all of birds nesting at Burton Mere.

Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) **(B)**

Although there were occupied nests on both the bunded pool and the fly-ash lagoon, there were no reports of fledged young this year. 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	150	100	54	52	120	122	100	240	600	1000	600	400

Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

A single on the marsh on Jan 22nd was the only record this year (P&SH).

Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

There were 10 records of singles during Jan-Feb and Sep-Dec, and one record of 3 birds on Sep 25th (PDS)

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

No evidence of nesting, but large numbers on the mudflats and (sometimes) the grazing fields in winter. The highest count of 3100 was made at low tide on Jan 18th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	3100	1000	2	0	0	52	138	120	130	96	950	1700

Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)

The first record was a single on the bunded pools on Apr 8th (KL-J), followed by 5 records of 2 birds there between Apr 13th and May 3rd, but still no evidence of attempted breeding. One bird was seen again on Jul 10th and 11th (P&SH). These birds are usually seen from the West Hide, but 2 there on Aug 8th was the only West Hide record this year (P&SH).

Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)

There was a good autumn passage with 200 birds seen on Oakenholt Marsh on both Aug 30th (PDS) and Aug 31st (P&SH) and another count of 40 on Sep 7th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	0	2	0	3	0	0	200	40	1	0	0

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

There were 11 spring records between Apr 18th and May 15th with a maximum of 7 on Apr 19th and May 19th (P&SH) and 8 autumn records of 1-2 birds between July 10th and Sep 2nd.

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	152	200	90	126	30	1	40	164	80	80	125	62

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

After a poor winter in 2015/16, numbers were back to normal for the 2016/17 winter, with a maximum count of 4000 on Oakenholt Marsh on Nov 20th (GEM). As usual, several 100 also used the fly ash lagoon from time to time (photo below).



Photo: GEM

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	1	150	30	3	6	2	1000	1200	2000	420	4000	1100

Notable sightings of ringed Black-tailed Godwit were:

- 1) Bird with broken leg, now 10 years old: ringed western France in Nov 2007 and first recorded on the Dee in Jul 2010. Present on the Reserve this year on Aug 8th (P&SH), Aug 18th and Sep 2nd (RB).
- 2) Bird ringed at Strangford Loch in Aug 2009 which appears to spend most, if not all, winter on the Dee each year since then. Seen at CQNR on Sep 15th (RB).

- 3) Bird ringed in Iceland in Jun 2010, which usually travels down the east coast on its way to Portugal, seen at CQNR for the first time on Sep 4th (RB).
- 4) Bird ringed as a chick in Iceland in Jun 2015, which passed through RSPB Conway that autumn and RSPB Leighton Moss in the spring of 2016, was seen at CQNR for the first time on Sep 4th (RB).

Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*)

Only one record of a single on Jun 25th (SS).

Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*)

There were singles on Feb 10th and 21st, and then 10 records of 1-2 birds between Aug 7th and Sep 23rd, many of them of birds on stony areas of the revetment.

Knot (*Calidris canutus*)

Knot numbers fell even lower this year with a maximum of only 55 on Aug 20th (P&SH). They often flock with the godwits, which have also been rather sporadic, especially in spring.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	10	0	1	0	0	0	50	55	12	2	4	0

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

The first record was on July 22nd (PJG) and the last on Sep 16th (P&SH), with a maximum of 2 on Aug 19th (SS). All 6 records were from the bunded pools.

Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*)

A good year with 10 records of 1-4 birds between Aug 19th and Sep 10th. Recorded on both Oakenholt Marsh and the bunded pools, the high count of 4 on the bunded pool being on Sep 10th (SP).

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)

There were 2 on Oakenholt Marsh on Aug 28th and 3 on Aug 30th (both PDS). An uncommon visitor this far from the coast.

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

A sporadic visitor in winter, as usual, but when present, numbers were large. The highest logbook count was 2,500 on Aug 30th (PDS).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	2000	400	150	3	80	0	12	2500	120	50	1000	1200

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)

There were 2 on Aug 29th (PDS) and a single on Aug 31st (P&SH).

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

There were a massive 75 records of 1-2 birds this year and it was hard to distinguish spring and autumn passages since they were present in every month between Apr and Dec. Unusually, there were 7 winter records of a single bird on the bunded pools in Nov-Dec (RR, TL).

Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*).

There were 2 singles on the bunded pools: one on Sep 8th (NMCM) and another on Nov 25th (MR).

Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*)

This Reserve speciality appears in significant numbers both on autumn passage and in winter. The highest count this year of 21 was on Sep 27th (P&SH), about average for the past 40 years, but rather better than the 10-year average of 16. Winter numbers were also good with 7 present in Jan, Feb and Nov.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	7	7	10	1	0	1	7	17	21	14	7	2

Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)

Another Reserve speciality, which frequents the bunded pools like the previous species. Autumn numbers remained a little below average with a maximum of 18 on Sep 9th (P&SH), the 10-year average being 26, but winter numbers remained healthy. The last spring bird was on May 8th and the first autumn bird on Jun 26th.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	7	8	7	1	1	1	10	17	18	16	7	5

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)

The highest count was 4,200 on Sep 20th (P&SH), an impressive sight as they gather on the bunded pools at high tide. Apart from the autumn passage, numbers were also good in both winters.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	500	760	200	89	13	100	840	1666	4200	1880	556	820

Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)

It was another extraordinary year for this species with a staggering 77 records from the bunded pools from Jan 1st to Mar 24th and from Sep 23rd to Dec 27th. Numbers were nearly as high as last year (when the max was 31) and included 8 counts of over 20 birds and a maximum of 27 on Dec 27th (P&SH). Good telescopes are making them easier to spot in the grass.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	23	23	13	1	0	0	0	0	1	6	10	27

Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*)

A single bird was seen with the Common Snipe on Nov 26th (SS) and 28th (P&SH).

Great Skua (*Stercorarius skua*).

One was seen on the banks of the fly-ash lagoon on Sep 18th and later died there (P&SH, RB). This was only the 5th Reserve record and the only one close enough for a good photograph.



Guillemot (*Uria aalge*)

One was seen on the river on Sep 19th (PDS).

Little Auk (*Alle alle*)

This **new bird** for the Reserve attracted many twitchers as it rested on the bunded pools on Jan 10th (P&SH and many others).



Photo: T Lovatt

Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*)

A single was seen on the river on Aug 20th (P&SH).

White-winged Black Tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*)

This **new bird** for the Reserve stayed briefly over the fly-ash lagoon on June 16th (P&SH) before continuing to Shotton Pools and Burton Mere RSPB later on the same day.

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

The first record of 3 over the river was on Apr 21st (KL-J) and the last was on Aug 14th. The highest count was 60 on May 28th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	0	0	3	60	20	20	3	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. On the late afternoon of July 18th, an estimated 3000-5000 flew in to roost on the sands at low tide (GEM). There was another count of 2,500 on Jul 24th (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	320	200	300	0	50	300	4000	2000	1000	25	100	n.d.

Common Gull (*Larus canus*)

Surprisingly uncommon on the Reserve, though they roost elsewhere on the estuary during the winter and commute daily to the hills to feed.

They are often 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	1	12	0	0	0	0	1	0	10	22	0

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 banded pools.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	70	46	40	21	30	40	53	103	100	80	140	87

Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*)

There were records of singles on Oakenholt Marsh on Jul 24th and Aug 1st (both P&SH) and Aug 8th (PDS).

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

Less common than Lesser Black-backed among roosting flocks, though it may be equally common flying over. The counts show that roosting numbers increase post-breeding.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	1	0	15	1	1	1	32	12	80	34	34	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	20	18	7	2	0	18	12	15	12	50	46

Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*)

Recorded in most months with sizeable flocks in winter. The highest count was 38 on Jan 31st and there were 12-20 during Dec 18th-27th (all P&SH). A couple of birds often frequent the bird feeders during the summer.

Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*) **(B)**

Present all year in small numbers. The largest flock of 60 was seen on Feb 24th (GEM). Breeding was proven, possibly for the first time (!), by a sighting of recently-fledged young on Jul 3rd (GEM)

Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

This species is found near the railway line at the back of the fly-ash lagoon, but rarely recorded in the logbooks. A single on May 21st was the only record (P&SH).

Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*)

One was seen flying across Burton Marsh on May 21st (P&SH). This is only the 3rd record in the last 20 years and was not strictly-speaking on the Reserve itself, although it was a common sight on the Reserve 30 years ago.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

A bird was seen near the helipad after dark at 20.00 on Oct 24th (obs?). This was only the 3rd record for the Reserve in 40 years and only the 2nd of a live bird.

Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

Two more records this year, although both were across the river. One was seen over Burton Marsh on May 21st and the second was flying along the revetment on June 20th (both P&SH). Summer records of this species are unusual and the possibility was raised of Long-eared Owl which nests locally. However, the sightings were of actively hunting birds in broad daylight, extremely unlikely for Long-eared Owl.

Swift (*Apus apus*)

The first record was on May 1st and the maximum count was 100 on Jun 28th and 30th (P&SH). The last record was on Jul 12th (P&SH).

Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

These favourites returned to the Reserve early this year on Jul 16th (P&SH). Thereafter, there were 60 records altogether, including four of 2 birds together on the Field Study Centre pool. There was only one record from the previous winter this year, a single on Feb 14th (PH).



Photo: GEM

Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*)

There was one record from the west end of the Reserve on May 21st (P&SH) and then 6 records of a juvenile at the east end and Nature Trail between Aug 10th and Sep 3rd (several obs).

Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*)

Only 6 records this year, often from near the bunded pool hides.

Magpie (*Pica pica*)

The highest count was 13 on Mar 10th (GEM). There were no summer records (Apr-Jun).

Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)

There were 7 records of 1-2 birds outside the breeding season (Jan-Mar and Sep-Dec).

Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)

Only 6 records this year, 5 of which were in May when the highest counts of 50 (May 10th) and 80 (May 29th) were made (both P&SH).

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)

Only 2 records, each of 3 birds on Sep 21st and 27th (both P&SH).

Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*) **(B)**

These are numerous on marsh, mudflats and grazing fields with peak numbers in the summer; maximum count of 78 on Jun 5th (P&SH).

Breeding was proven by the presence of recently-fledged young on Jul 3rd (GEM). The counts below are largely from the monthly WeBS survey (P&SH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	20	20	35	48	50	78	66	23	52	33	12	15

Raven (*Corvus corax*)

There were 8 records of 1-2 birds only, in most months except Apr-May.

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)

This species continues to be frequently reported. There were 14 records this year, mainly from Rockcliffe, including a male singing on Feb 24th. The highest count was 4 on Dec 2nd (P&SH).

Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) **(B)**

The main occupant of Reserve nest-boxes, the highest count was of 8 on Jul 10th (P&SH). Evidence of breeding was the presence of recently-fledged young on Jul 3rd (GEM).

Great Tit (*Parus major*)

Another common nesting species with maximum counts of 4 in Jun/Jul but singing males were the only evidence of nesting recorded.

Coal Tit (*Parus ater*)

One was seen at Rockcliffe on Feb 5th (P&SH) and Feb 7th (PDS).

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

There were no singing male records this year and only 8 records altogether. The highest counts were of 30 on Oakenholt Marsh on Jan 30th and Feb 12th (both SS).

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)

The highest counts were of 50 on Apr 25th and 27th (both P&SH). First and last dates were Mar 27th (EJ) and Aug 15th (P&SH).

Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

The highest count this year was 200 on Aug 28th (P&SH). First and last dates were Mar 26th (NE) and Sep 21st (P&SH).

House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*)

The highest count on passage was of 40 birds on Aug 20th (P&SH). First and last dates were May 4th (MJR) and Aug 20th (P&SH).

Longtailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*)

There were 14 records this year from Jan, Mar, Apr, Jul, Aug, Nov and Dec, with a high count of 20 on Jul 10th (P&SH).

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

The first record was on Mar 23rd and the last, of 3 birds, on Oct 10th (both P&SH), with a high count of 11 passage birds on Apr 9th (P&SH). No proof of breeding this year, although a male sang at Rockcliffe throughout the summer. There was one record of a wintering bird on Nov 24th (GH).

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

The first record was of 4 birds on Apr 8th (KL-J) and the last on Aug 8th (PDS). The maximum count was 6 on Apr 16th (GP). Passage only.

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

No proof of breeding this year, though a pair was present at Rockcliffe during the summer. The first record was Apr 9th (P&SH) and the last on Sep 1st (GEM), with a high count of 6 (4M, 2F) on May 3rd (KL-J).

Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*)

There were 2 late passage birds present in hedgerows near the entrance on Jun 16th and 17th (P&SH).

Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*).

The highest count was 4 on May 3rd (KL-J) and Jun 16/17th (P&SH). It is likely that 2-3 pairs nested again, though no evidence of success was recorded in the logbooks. First and last dates were May 3rd (KL-J) and Aug 28th (P&SH).

Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

Between May 3rd and Jun 23rd, there were 2 records of singles and one record of a pair (KL-J, P&SH), often in the reeds of the fly-ash lagoon.

Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

A passage migrant was seen in the fly-ash reeds on both Jul 24th and Aug 1st (PDS).

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 3 this year was on Feb 24th (GEM).

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

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

The highest count of 600 on Oakenholt Marsh was on Jan 27th (GEM).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	600	30	30	0	100	300	75	150	170	225	70	120

Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)

The highest count was 24 on Nov 8th (GEM), a rather spectacular influx of wintering birds, but there were no logbook records of successful breeding, although present throughout the year.

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)

The last record of the winter was 2 birds on Apr 15th and they re-appeared with 20 birds on Nov 27th (both P&SH). This was also the highest count of the 15 logbook records.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)

The highest count was of 50 birds on Jan 28/29th (P&SH) and there were 41 on Boxing Day (RB). There were 13 records during the year.

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)

The highest counts were of only 3 birds on Nov 8th (GEM) and Dec 2nd (P&SH). A singing male held territory in the Rockcliffe area during summer but no other evidence of breeding.

Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*)

The highest count was 10 on Jun 17th (P&SH), a possible family party, but there was no other evidence of breeding among 11 records altogether.

Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)

A common resident. Recorded 37 times throughout the year, there was a high count of 6 on Dec 27th (P&SH).

Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

It was a very good year for this species, with 28 records during autumn migration (many obs - Jun 30th-Aug 24th) and 2 in the spring (Apr 15th – P&SH and Apr 21st – KL-J). The highest count was of 5 birds on Jul 16th and 31st, Aug 1st and 8th (SS, P&SH),

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)

Singles were seen on Apr 29th, Jul 3rd and Oct 6th (all P&SH).

Stonechat (*Saxicola torquatus*)

There was only one record of a single on Oct 10th (RR).

Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

The first record was a single on Mar 27th (SS) and the highest spring count was 14 on Apr 19th (P&SH). Autumn migration was better than last year with 13 records of 1-4 birds between Aug 2nd and Sep 20th, and a total of 38 records during the year.

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

Breeding was proven when this common resident seen carrying food on Jul 3rd (GEM). The highest count was 6 on Feb 24th (GEM).

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Only seen in the summer months (Apr-Aug) when they are often at the feeders. Highest count of 6 on May 8th (P&SH).

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava flavissima*)

Two birds in spring on Apr 21st (P&SH) and May 5th (KL-J). They are usually seen in the West Hide area.

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)

There was one at Rockcliffe on Feb 2nd (PDS) and 2 near West Hide on Jun 12th (P&SH). A ringed bird was seen 6 times near West Hide between Aug 19th and Dec 7th (RB, P&SH).

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

Breeding (at least, nearby) was confirmed by 5 fledged young with 2 adults on the fly ash lagoon on Jun 28th (P&SH). There was a high count of 15 near the West Hide on Jun 17th (P&SH).

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba alba*).

Only one record of a single on Apr 9th (P&SH).

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)

The highest count of 20 birds was made 5 times, on Apr 5th, 9th and 15th and on Oct 2nd and 12th (all P&SH). There were 22 records altogether, covering every month except Jun and Aug/Sep.

Rock Pipit (*Anthus petrosus*)

This species is usually recorded on the rocks around the West Hide in winter, usually after a high tide. There were 9 Jan-Feb and 6 Oct-Dec records of 1-3 birds (many obs).

Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*)

One record from the West Hide on Dec 12th (SS).

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

No large winter flocks and a high count of only 16 birds on Nov 20th (GEM). There was no evidence of breeding, apart from singing males.

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

Like last year, there was one record of a male bird below the feeders on Feb 12th (SD).

Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

Recorded mainly in the Rockcliffe area, the highest count was of 4 birds on Feb 2nd (PDS). 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 30 birds on July 12th and 15th (P&SH). The only evidence of breeding was a singing male on Jul 3rd (GEM). They are often seen on the feeders and there were 28 logbook records.

Twite (*Carduelis flavirostris*)

Winter flocks of up to 120 birds (on Nov 27th, P&SH) were present around the West Hide.

The programme of observation and ringing in support of the Welsh Twite Recovery Project is continuing on the Reserve (RB). This year 33 birds were newly-ringed (bringing the total on-site to 115) and ringed birds from both Snowdonia and Mull of Kintyre were trapped.



Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	91	110	70	9	0	0	0	0	0	25	120	60

Read article about twite ringing at CQNR, 2014-2016 (IMS):

<http://www.deenats.org.uk/docs/reportontwiteringingatcqnr2016v2.pdf>

Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*) (B)

Evidence of breeding was an adult carrying food on Jul 3rd (GEM) and 2 adults with 3 young on Jun 17th (P&SH). Large flocks were of 100+ were seen from Oct 21st onwards with a high count of 180 on Dec 26th (RB).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	20	0	2	6	4	6	50	20	40	153	100	180

Lesser Redpoll (*Acanthis cabaret*)

This species was recorded for only the 5th year on the Reserve and the count of 13 near the Reserve entrance on Dec 21st (P&SH) was almost a record. A single bird was also seen on the feeders on Mar 12th (EN).

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

The largest post-breeding flocks were of 100 birds on Oct 1st (RR) and Oct 9th (P&SH). There were 40 logbook records in every month except March.

Siskin (*Spinus spinus*)

Three birds on the feeders on Apr 13th was only the 11th record for the Reserve (JH).

Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

The maximum count of 13 was on Dec 27th (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	1	1	2	3	1	2	3	2	1	8	2	13

Mammals:

Fox: There were 20 records of Fox this year, including 2 records of 2 adults and a cub on May 29th and Jun 5th. One was seen carrying a rabbit on Jun 16th and 19th and another eating a dead Canada Goose on Apr 5th

Grey Squirrel: Two at the Study Centre on Sep 1st and one at Rockcliffe on Nov 8th (under-recorded). **Rabbits** are also under-recorded.

Brown Rat: Sixteen adults and young were seen under the feeders on Apr 27th and a dead one on Aug 21st.

Voles: Those hiding under reptile refuges appeared to include both Field Vole (Aug 14th) and Bank Vole (Sep 1st).

Toad: Also under reptile refuges, several small toads.

Reptile refuges failed to reveal any other amphibians or snakes/lizards.

Once again, there was record of 1000 **Garden Chafers** 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.

Richard Beckett (RB)

N Edwards (NE)

G Harris (GH)

Joan Hotchkiss (JH)

E Jones (EJ)

T Lovatt (TL)

S Palin (SP)

E Nixon (EN)

P&S Parker (P&SP)

R Riley (RR)

Geoff Robinson (GR)

PD Shenton (PDS)

Ian Spence (IMS)

S Davies (SD)

PJ Greenwood (PJG)

Peter & Sue Haslem (P&SH)

Phil Hotchkiss (PH)

Keith Lloyd-Jones (KL-J)

Glenn Morris (GEM)

N McMorrin (NMCM)

MJ Ratcliffe (MJR)

Giles Pepler (GP)

R & G Riley (R&GR)

M Rothwell (MR)

S Skelton (SS)

Colin Wells (CW)

Butterfly Report 2016

Butterfly monitoring started on the DNS Reserve in 2011. Two areas on the Reserve were set up and up until 2016 the two areas have been monitored each year. However, because of the work being carried out on the Nature Trail area it became increasingly difficult to carry out the counts properly so in 2015 new areas of the Reserve were monitored.

Again this year it was decided not to carry out any butterfly monitoring on the Nature Trail area and continue with the new areas which have shown a variety of species. The recorders continued with the three new transects which were set up in 2015 covering the road from the Field Study Centre to the Helipad and also the path alongside the access road to the reserve. The Wetland Meadow area was monitored as usual.

Counts were carried out between May and end of August on 8 occasions, not as many this year because of poor weather conditions and personal issues within the group of recorders.

The following were recorded: Small Tortoiseshell, Green Veined White, Peacock, Comma, Large White, Orange Tip, Speckled Wood, Small White, Large Skipper, Common Blue, Red Admiral, Meadow Brown, Small Skipper, Painted Lady, Gatekeeper, Holly Blue. Altogether 16 species recorded this year. There has been a total of 25 species recorded on the Reserve since transects were established in 2011.

There were fewer Small Tortoiseshells this year. Overall numbers across the Reserve peaked in July/August when Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns were there in large numbers.

The results are sent to Butterfly Conservation, Wales. Their website is: www.butterfly-conservation.org. Annual reports are produced yearly by UKBMS and available on their website: <http://www.ukbms.org/>.

The group of recorders that have given their time to record the butterflies on the DNS Reserve are now stepping down. So that the

valuable work can continue DNS is looking for members who would be interested in taking on the organising, recording and sending results to Butterfly Conservation. Although we have been recording the butterfly counts on paper there is now also an on-line system.

I am willing to show anyone interested in taking on this valuable work how the recording has been carried out in this and previous years. If you are interested please contact me through the Secretary on: secretary@deenats.org.uk.

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