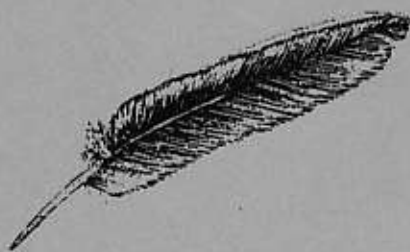


DEESIDE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

BIRD REPORT

1992 - 1996



DEESIDE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

**38 Kelsterton Road
Connah's Quay
Flintshire
CH5 4BJ**

January 1997

This Report records the birds observed along the shoreline of the River Dee between Flint Castle and Connah's Quay by members of Deeside Naturalists' Society during the years 1992 - 1996.

We are indebted to Ron Plummer for his painstaking work in collating the records of the 119 species of birds recorded in the hide log books and from members' notes. Ron also illustrated and produced the Report.

The Report owes much to the members who regularly record their sightings. Without their efforts such an informative document could not be produced and we thank each and every one for their contribution.

Oswald M Davies.
Chairman

SYSTEMATIC LIST

RED THROATED DIVER

gavia stellata.

The smallest of the divers. The red-throated diver has a small head and an upturned bill. This bird is more often seen on the estuary but one diver, in part summer plumage, was recorded on the bunded pool in October 1993.



GREAT CRESTED GREBE

podiceps cristatus.

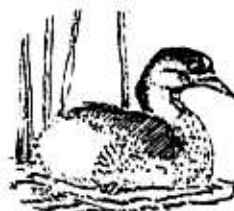
Great crested grebes can be seen regularly between September and June both on the river and on the bunded pools. Numbers fluctuate from sightings of a single bird to as many as sixteen seen fishing the tide in November 1993. Twenty six were seen at once during May 1994 and twenty three were seen in October 1994.



LITTLE GREBE

tachybaptus ruficollis.

Most often seen on the fly ash lagoon and bunded pools during the winter months. Sightings are usually of single birds but four were seen together on the flyash lagoon in November 1994. There have been three other records of a pair together and two were on the river in January 1994.



LEACH'S PETREL

oceanodroma leucorhoa.

One bird seen on the river at 9.45 a.m., 24th. September 1995.



CORMORANT

phalacrocorax carbo.

The highest count for the period was of 114 birds roosting at low water in October 1995. This beat the previous best by one bird from October 1994. Cormorants have been recorded on the reserve every month for the period of this report. There is still some doubt as to how to distinguish between the Atlantic race and the Continental race (*p.c.sinensis*) but, according to the authorities, the white guller patch is more square and extends behind the eye of the continental bird. The amount of white at the back of the head is not a true indication as this is common to both races as they age (R.M.Sellers. unpublished 1989). It seems strange that given the good numbers of cormorant regularly seen on the reserve none has yet been noted as being colour ringed.

GREY HERON

ardea cinera.

Despite its size it is easy to overlook the grey heron, especially when it is stood motionless at the water's edge or hunched in the lee of the land out of the wind on a cold winter's day. Herons are regular visitors to the reserve. Numbers fluctuate from a single bird to a peak of forty recorded in October 1993.



MUTE SWAN

cygnus olor.

The peak count for the period was of 26 birds in November 1996. For the most the mute swan is an irregular visitor to the pools and fields. More usually it can be seen on the river in small family groups.



BEWICK'S SWAN

cygnus columbianus.

A winter visitor from northern Russia and north-western Siberia. The Bewick's swan is sometimes seen on the bunded pools. There have only been eight recorded sightings during the period covered. Two counts of ten, in November 1992 and March 1994. Two counts of nine, two counts of seven, one of six and one of four on the bunded pools in November 1996.



GREYLAG GOOSE

anser anser.

A bulky bird with a thick neck, big head and orange bill. The British numbers are increased during winter by visitors from Iceland. Of the five recorded sightings on the reserve two were of lone birds, in June 1993 and January 1996. Two were of three birds each, November 1992 and November 1993, and one of two birds in December 1995.



BAR HEADED GOOSE

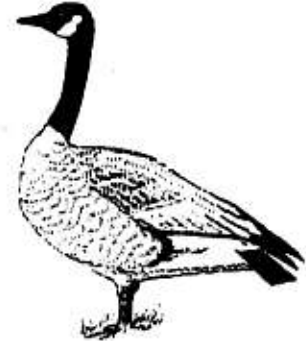
anser indicus.

Probably an escapee from a private collection. Three sightings of a single bird, November and December 1995 and then again in January 1996, amongst the flock of Canada's.

CANADA GOOSE

branta canadensis

Flocks of Canada geese usually start visiting the area in September and can be seen until early February. The largest count was of 680 in November 1995. This was followed by counts of 633 in January 1996, Two hundred and fifty eight in November 1993, Three hundred and ninety five during the following November and 490 in December 1995.



BRENT GOOSE

branta bernicula

Two birds recorded during September 1992 could be the same two that were recorded later in November the same year. The only other sighting was of a single brent goose in January 1996.

SHELDUCK

tadorna tadorna

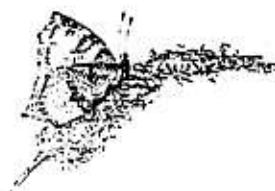
Large numbers of shelduck make their annual migration to German Waddensee where they moult their flight feathers after the breeding season. Even so it is still possible to see numbers of up to 200 on Flint sands with lesser numbers roosting and feeding on the bunded pools.



WIGEON

anas penelope

A winter visitor to the River Dee. Wigeon can be seen between September and February either grazing around, or dabbling on the bunded pools. The numbers are usually nominal for the reserve but in September 1995 a count of 1634 was recorded.



GADWALL

anas streperata.

A scarce visitor to the area. Only three reports of sightings for this period produced a total of ten birds, one during September 1992, four in January 1996 and five on the ash pool in December 1996.

TEAL

anas crecca

By far the most abundant of our wintering ducks. From September to March counts of over one thousand are not uncommon. The highest count for the period was of a staggering 2710 during October 1992. Again during October, but this time 1995, a total of two thousand and sixty seven were counted at one sitting. Other counts of note were:-

- 1837 in November 1992
- 1497 in November 1993
- 1695 in November 1994
- 1056 in January 1996



MALLARD

anas platyrhynchos

Mallard have been recorded, in varying numbers, every month for the period of this report. This began in September 1992 with a count of 267. The figure rose to seven hundred and fifty in August 1994 then fell to eighteen in May 1995. Eight hundred and fifty six were recorded in September 1995 but by February 1996 the total had decreased to one hundred and forty eight.

PINTAIL

anas actua

Despite a decline in numbers over the past seven years the Dee estuary is still the prime area of international importance for pintail. Large flocks roost on the sandbars at low water. As the tide returns the pintail take to the air and wheel over the estuary in dense clouds. Most of the birds fly off towards the Wirral but it is not unusual for up to 1200 to come in and roost on the bunded pools. Any area holding above 700 pintail is deemed to be of international importance. With regular counts of over one thousand and a peak count of 3404, in February 1996 it is understandable why this estuary is top of the list.



SHOVELER

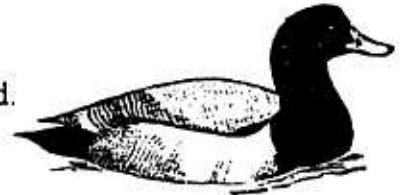
anas clypeata

Although this duck does visit the estuary during winter there have only been three records for this survey period. Two birds were seen on each occasion of October 1993, February 1994 and January 1996.

POCHARD

aythya ferina

There are no records of pochard visiting the reserve during this period.



TUFTED DUCK

aythya fuligula

Sightings of this small diving duck were of a male on the bunded pools in October 1992, a group of five birds also on the pools in September 1993 and a pair on the fly ash pool in December 1996.

SCAUP

aythya marila

A single scaup was seen on two occasions but there was no mention as to the sex of either bird.

GOLDENEYE

bucephala clangula

An infrequent winter visitor to the bunded pools and seen occasionally on the river. Six recorded sightings for the period produced a total of ten birds.



RED BREASTED MERGANSER

mergus serrator

Two records produced a total of four birds. Three in November and one in December 1995.

GOOSANDER

mergus merganser

One record of a single bird on the river in October 1992.



HEN HARRIER

circus cyaneus

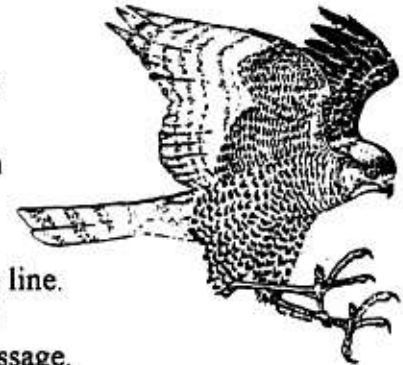
Smaller than the marsh harrier (*c. aeruginosus*). The male is grey and white with black wing tips. The female and young are dark brown with the distinctive "ring-tail" and a white rump. Although the hen harrier is mainly sedentary the female numbers increase in winter with visitors from the continent. Their diet consists mostly of small birds and rodents. Being an infrequent visitor to the reserve, there were only two recorded sightings, a female in August 1992 and a male in January 1995, for this period.



SPARROWHAWK

accipiter nisus.

It is good to see the sparrowhawk making a come-back. The male is much smaller than the female and is light brown underneath. The female has a dark brown back, is heavily streaked underneath and has less light brown to its breast. The yellow eye is fierce. Both birds soar to great heights. They hunt by surprise, swooping on their prey from a hidden perch or by flying low along a hedge line. Sparrowhawks have been recorded on the reserve throughout the survey period, mainly from the west hide, both hunting and on passage.



BUZZARD

buteo buteo.

An infrequent visitor, but a joy to see, from the higher ground. Buzzards are spreading their wings and it is not unusual to now see them circling above the estuary or being "mobbed" by crows. One buzzard was recorded from the west hide in August 1993.



KESTREL

falco tinnunculus.

Not as common as they once were but kestrels can still be seen on most visits to the reserve. They tend to favour the area around the visitors centre where they watch from a vantage point for the insects and small mammals that make up their main diet.



MERLIN

falco columbarius.

The merlin is the smallest of the common raptors, the male is only about the size of the mistle thrush and has a slate blue back with heavily streaked and buff underparts. The female is just slightly larger with a brown back and a dark and light barred tail. A female was chased across the reserve towards the revetment by a sparrowhawk in August 1992. There have been occasional sightings near to Flint castle during 1996.



PEREGRINE

falco peregrinus.

A large powerful falcon with a slightly tapering tail and broad, pointed wings. The peregrine has been seen taking prey in front of the west hide. Both males and females have stooped for, and caught, teal. Juveniles can be fun to watch when they do not quite get their technique right. When a flock of roosting waders "lift" for no reason it is always worth looking up to see if a peregrine is about. A pair bred on the reserve in 1996 and fledged two young.



GREY PARTRIDGE

perdix perdix.

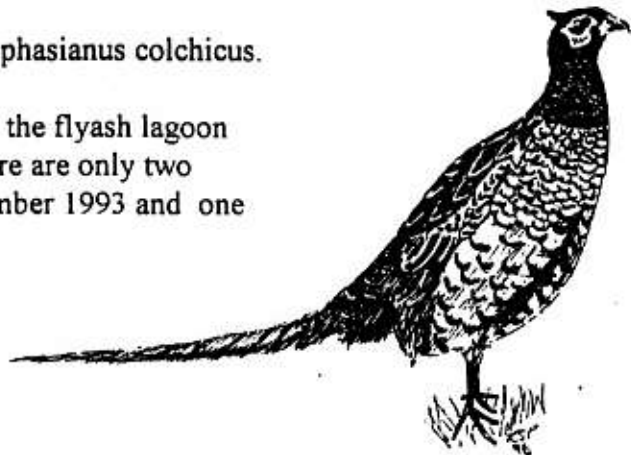
Grey partridge are known to be in the area. Early in the mornings when all is quiet they can be heard calling from the fields and by the flyash lagoon. There have been two sightings for the period. Four birds were seen together in January 1992 and two birds were noted in June 1993.



PHEASANT

phasianus colchicus.

Pheasants sometimes visit the area around the flyash lagoon and the open ground by the west hide. There are only two recorded sightings, one of a male in September 1993 and one of two males in October 1993.



MOORHEN

gallinula chloropus

All the recorded sightings were from the fly ash lagoon. There is evidence of at least one pair breeding during the survey period. Up to nine adults have been seen at one time.



COOT

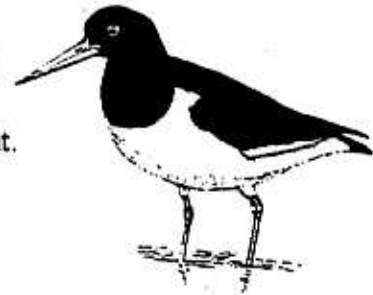
fulica atra.

A new species for the reserve. First recorded in April 1994. Coot were seen on the fly ash lagoon in May that same year, then four adults with four juveniles were noted in June. They are now a regular feature and bred on the ash pool in 1996.

OYSTERCATCHER

haematopus ostralegus.

Evidence of oystercatchers breeding on the reserve was confirmed in July 1994 when two juveniles were seen in the vicinity of the bunded pools. In 1996 the flyash pool island was used as a nest site. The peak count for the period was of 8300 birds in October 1995.



RINGED PLOVER

charadrius hiaticula

Recorded on the reserve only during the migration periods. Fifty three birds were noted at one time in late August 1993 with a flock of 203 being seen exactly twelve months later.
22nd

GOLDEN PLOVER

pluvialis apricaria

Mainly recorded on the reserve during the winter months. The peak count was of thirty six in October 1993. There have also been counts of thirty three in February 1994 with lesser numbers recorded during December 1995 and January 1996.



GREY PLOVER

pluvialis squatarola

An infrequent visitor during winter. Eight were recorded in February 1994. Four other records produced nine birds between December 1994 to December 1995 with a group of nine roosting in January 1996.

LAPWING

vanellus vanellus.

Lapwing have been recorded on all parts of the reserve during the period of this survey. There is evidence of breeding and young lapwings have been observed. The highest count, by far, was of 5411 birds in December 1995. There have also been many records of over one thousand, four counts over two thousand with one count each of four thousand five hundred and three thousand five hundred. Even so the lapwing population in general is on a downward spiral due to loss of habitat and change in agricultural practices.



SANDERLING

calidris alba

The only recorded sighting on the reserve was of a single bird in May 1994.

LITTLE STINT

calidris minuta

One report of two birds in September 1993 gave no indication as to where on the reserve they were seen.

KNOT

calidris canutus

Flocks of knot can be seen either wheeling over the estuary or roosting on the banded pools at high tide. At low water they move out to the sand bars to feed. Knot begin their over winter stay during September and are usually all returned to their summer grounds of the high arctic by March, although a few non breeding birds remain well into July. The peak count was of 1057 in November 1993 but numbers of between two and five hundred are more common for the reserve.



CURLEW SANDPIPER

calidris ferruginea

One record for the area was a single bird in September 1994.



DUNLIN

calidris alpina

The Dee estuary is the eleventh most internationally important site for wintering dunlin. This small wader is constantly on the move as it feeds along the tide line and on the sand bars at low water. As the tide turns great flocks of dunlin will take to the air and wheel over the estuary their undersides flashing silver from the water's reflection, then as they turn they almost disappear as their darker backs blend in with the dull sky. Dunlin will roost on the banded pools at high tide and it makes a wonderful sight to see them in amongst the knot and black tailed godwits. The birds begin to arrive in the area, from their breeding grounds in the arctic, during July and will stay until the following March. In 1993/4 their numbers rose, from a first recorded sighting of two, to three thousand nine hundred and twenty. Again in 1994/5 their numbers rose to four thousand four hundred and seventy six. In January 1996 a flock of six thousand two hundred birds was recorded.



RUFF

philomachus pugnax

The ruff is only an infrequent visitor to the reserve and is very easy to overlook. Their dull appearance, out of breeding plumage is similar to that of the redshank. There were three recorded sightings over the period covered, two birds in September 1992 and one bird in February 1996.



JACK SNIPE

lymnocryptes minimus

Smaller than the common snipe (*gallinago gallinago*) with a shorter bill and a more direct flight. The jack snipe is even harder to detect than its larger cousin because it has a habit of sitting motionless for long spells. Although this species is known to be in the area it is no great surprise that there are no recorded sightings for the period covered by this report.



SNIPE

gallinago gallinago

The bold colouring of the snipe's plumage help it to blend into its surroundings. For this reason it is very easy to overlook the bird as it sits motionless amongst the grass. Those that have been recorded on the reserve are from the banded pools area. Usually a single bird is noted but in January 1996 six snipe were seen feeding together.

BLACK TAILED GODWIT

limosa limosa

A visit to the reserve any time between late August and March will allow the observer to see flocks of up to 1200 black tailed godwit feeding on the sand bars at low water. As the tide turns the birds take to the air in dense clouds and fly in to roost, in large groups, on the banded pools. These groups are forever changing shape as the godwits nervously flit up and land again within a few feet of their take-off point. The black tailed godwit has slightly longer legs and a straighter bill than the bar tailed godwit. The peak count for the period was 2250 in October 1993. The Dee estuary is the third most internationally important site for this bird.



BAR TAILED GODWIT

limosa lapponica

Similar to the black tailed godwit but with a slightly upturned bill and less black on the primaries. The bar tailed godwit is only an infrequent visitor to the reserve. The highest count was of 20 birds in October 1994.



WHIMBREL

numenius phaeopus

A summer visitor to the reserve. The whimbrel is similar to the curlew but is smaller, with a shorter bill and a dark lateral crown stripe. Five were counted on the marsh in May 1994 with seven being seen in April 1995.



CURLEW

numenius arquata

The Dee estuary is fourth in the international importance league for curlew. The peak count is of 348 birds in March 1995. This was an unusually high figure with numbers being normally between fifty and one hundred and fifty. Curlew can be seen, or heard, during a visit to the reserve at any time of the year.

SPOTTED REDSHANK

tringa erythropus

Larger and neater than the redshank the spotted redshank can vary in colour from light grey in winter to dark black in summer. The birds are seen on passage from July to October. There have been four counts in the low twenties and four in the 'teens with a further twenty single figure sightings for this period.



REDSHANK

tringa totanus

It is almost impossible to visit the reserve without either seeing or hearing redshank. The Dee is of prime international importance and counts of up to 4000 are not uncommon for the area although between five hundred and one thousand is more common.



GREENSHANK

tringa nebularia

An "on passage" visitor to the reserve between July and November. The peak count was of thirty nine birds in September 1994.

COMMON SANDPIPER

actitis hypoleucos

A small, compact wader seen either "wagging" at the water's edge or flying low over the area with stiff flicks of its wings. The common sandpiper is usually seen by the bunded pools. There have been two counts of ten birds, September 1993 and July 1994, with one or two birds being noted on nine other occasions through the summer months.



GREAT SKUA

stercorarius skua

A large, powerful scavenger. The great skua is fast and hawk-like as it chases other sea birds, usually terns, in an effort to get its victim to disgorge food. This bird is only rarely seen so far into the estuary. One was seen over the river during September 1995.

ARCTIC SKUA

stercorarius parasiticus

Smaller and more slender than the great skua with long, narrow pointed wings. The central tail feathers of the adult are tapered and extended. Like the great skua the arctic skua chases terns in the hope of getting them to disgorge food. Again they are more common further down the estuary but one was recorded over the river in October 1994.

GULLS

lariadea.

The gull population for the reserve has not been broken down into individual species. Mixed flocks of up to 2000 birds are not uncommon. There was a peak count in August 1993 of nearly eight thousand individuals.

ICELAND GULL

larus glaucoides.

About the size of the herring gull (*l. argentatus.*) but slimmer and without any black on the wings or tail. One bird was recorded on the reserve in September 1992.

ARCTIC TERN

sterna paradisaea.

Paler than the common tern (*s. hirundo.*) with a blood red bill. Arctic terns can be seen flying out over the river during most days between April and October. There are records of arctic terns roosting on the bunded pools during this survey period.

COMMON TERN

sterna hirundo.

On occasions common terns will roost on the bunded pools but more often they can be seen flying up and down the estuary. The peak count was of 184 birds in June 1993.

LITTLE TERN

sterna albifrons.

An infrequent visitor to the reserve, the little tern is a summer visitor from Africa. Two records for the period produced ten birds, eight were seen flying down river on 13th August 1993 and two were noted together in July 1994.

BLACK TERN

chlidonias niger.

The black tern is about the same size as the little tern (*s. albifrons*) but is bulkier and has wider wings and a more square tail. One bird was recorded over the river in May 1992.

GUILLEMOT

uria aalge.

Sometimes seen on the river but more often further down the estuary. One was noted on each of two occasions during 1993 and one was seen to be chased by a cormorant in September 1994.

STOCK DOVE

columba oenas.

Similar to the wood pigeon (*c. palumbus*) but more compact. No white to the sides of the neck or wing bars. Flight is on stiffer wings. The stock dove can be seen on most occasions by the bunded pools feeding in small groups.

WOOD PIGEON

columba palumbus.

Occasionally seen flying around the reserve or feeding on the grassy areas.

COLLARED DOVE

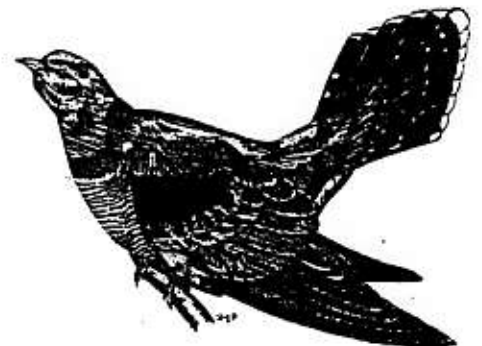
streptopelia decaocto.

Two were noted on the reserve on 7th. June 1993.

CUCKOO

cuculus canorus.

The familiar sound of the cuckoo is only made by the male, the female is more of a bubbling chuckle. In flight the cuckoo is very hawk like with long, tapering wings. It is a summer visitor from Africa. Four have been recorded on the reserve for the period, one in August 1992, one in June 1993 and two in 1996.



LITTLE OWL

athene noctua.

Defined as being "diurnal and crepuscular". In common terms, a creature of habit and becoming active at dusk. After all that there has only been one sighting of a little owl on the reserve. That was by the study centre during October 1993.



KINGFISHER

alcedo atthis.

Occasionally seen as a flash of electric blue flying low along the gully by the old bridge. The female has more orange in the base of the bill. They are seldom heard but their call is a shrill "chwee".



GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *dendrocopus major.*

About the size of the starling (*s. vulgaris*) the great spotted woodpecker is mostly glossy black with a large white patch on each shoulder and a red rump. The male has a red patch at the back of his head. One bird was seen in the trees by the bunded pools in December 1992 but there was no record as to its sex.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *dendrocopus minor.*

Similar in size to the house sparrow (*p. domesticus*) the lesser spotted woodpecker tends to stay amongst the smaller, higher branches and twigs of trees. It is never seen on the ground. The male has a red crown whilst the females' is white. A single bird was noted along the nature trail in October 1993.

SKYLARK

alauda arvensis.

There is growing concern over the rapid decline in skylark numbers. So far there is no indication as to what the reason is, although there have been some ideas put forward. The skylark can be seen all year round on the reserve but it is usually only during the warm days of spring and summer that its song can be heard from on high. The skylark nests on the ground and its main food is seeds and insects.



SWIFT

apus apus.

The swift is the largest of the hirundines / apodia to visit the U.K. on a regular basis. It has large scythe shaped wings and a short, forked tail. Swifts begin to arrive in April and will be the first to leave in August. During their stay they can be seen flying high over the fields hawking for insects. They have been noted in groups of up to 300 over the reserve.

SWALLOW

hirundo rustica.

Swallows have been recorded in groups of up to 100 during each summer for the period of the survey. They are usually the first of the hirundines to arrive from their wintering grounds of Africa, and can be seen from March through to September, when they are amongst the last to leave. Swallows are dark blue above with white underparts and a red chin. Sexes are identified by the longer streamers to the tail of the male. It is the female that arrives first with the males following about two weeks later.



HOUSE MARTIN

delichon urbica.

Similar to the swallow but with a shorter tail and a white rump. House martins begin to arrive in April and will stay until October.



MEADOW PIPIT

anthus pratensis.

This small olive brown bird can be seen on most visits to the reserve as it looks for seeds and insects in the grassy areas. During the spring and summer it can be observed "parachuting". The bird will take to the air from the ground, gain a decent height and then drop back to the ground on an open winged glide whilst singing its accelerating piping song.

ROCK PIPIT

anthus spinoletta.

The rock pipit is similar to the meadow pipit but is larger and has a longer bill. The body is not so heavily streaked and has darker legs. Two were seen on the reserve in December 1994.



YELLOW WAGTAIL

motacilla flava.

Smaller and slimmer than both the grey and pied wagtails. The yellow wagtail is an all over yellow with a greenish tinge to its back and black primaries and tail. There are several sub species but the most common in Britain is *m.f.flavissima*. Yellow wagtails can be seen on the reserve occasionally between April and October. They then return to overwinter in Africa.

GREY WAGTAIL

motacilla cinera.

Most often mistaken for the yellow wagtail. The grey wagtail is only yellow on its rump and breast. It has a grey back and head with black primaries and tail. This species is resident all year.



PIED WAGTAIL

motacilla alba.

By far the most common of the wagtails. The species *m.a. yarrelli* can be seen on the reserve at all times of the year. There are some visitors from Northern Europe. The white wagtail (*m.a.alba*) has a lighter back and is cleaner looking.

WREN

troglodytes troglodytes.

The small bird with a big voice. Wrens are resident on the reserve and are most often seen skulking along the line of trees that screen the bunded pool area or on the nature trail. Their flight is slow but their wings are a blur and they never fly far. The wren's alarm call is a series of loud *tik-tiks* and the song is loud and shrill.

DUNNOCK

prunella modularis.

The dunnock, or hedge sparrow, is closer related to the robin than the sparrow. This drab, brown and grey bird is shy and tends to stay close to the hedgerows. Its song is a rather shrill broken warble. The dunnock can be seen on most visits to the reserve.

ROBIN

erithacus rubecula.

The robin is our national bird and is loved by all but he is not as soft as he looks. During the breeding season he becomes very territorial and has been known to kill any other robin that strays onto his "patch". For all this the robin is often overlooked during the summer and tends to be noticed more in the winter probably because this is the time of year that they forget their territories to search for food. It is virtually impossible to tell the sexes apart.



REDSTART

phoenicurus phoenicurus.

Similar in some ways to the robin (e.rubecula). The redstart is a summer visitor from Africa. It is easily distinguished by its grey back, black face and rufous breast, flanks and tail. The song is similar to that of the chiffchaff with a hint of robin. One bird was noted in August 1992.

WHINCHAT

saxicola rubetra.

One bird recorded during April 1993 is the only recent sighting on the reserve. The whinchat is a summer visitor from Africa.

STONECHAT

saxicola torquata.

One male bird was seen on the reserve in November 1992. The stonechat is a dumpy, sparrow sized bird. The male is mostly dark brown above with a white patch either side of its throat and a red breast. The female is much paler. This bird is resident all year and lives on open ground, usually by the coast.

WHEATEAR

oenanthe oenanthe.

Wheatears begin to arrive in the area during March. Both northern and southern races have been regularly seen on the reserve. The southern race (o.o. oenanthe) winters in Africa. The male has a blue grey back and buff breast. The wings and cheeks are black and there is a black inverted "T" on an otherwise white tail. The northern race (o.o. leucorrhoa) is a visitor from Greenland. This bird is slightly larger and stands more erect. It is overall more duller than the southern race. In both races the female is the first to arrive with the male following about two weeks later. A count of twenty was recorded in April 1992.



FIELDFARE

turdus pilaris.

The largest of our wintering thrushes the fieldfare is a visitor from Scandinavia. It is about the size of the mistle thrush and has a grey head and rump with a black tail. Flocks of fieldfare are seen each year on the reserve either in the tree screens or "marching" across the fields in search of food. The voice is a harsh "chak-chak", and sounds not unlike a chuckle.



BLACKBIRD

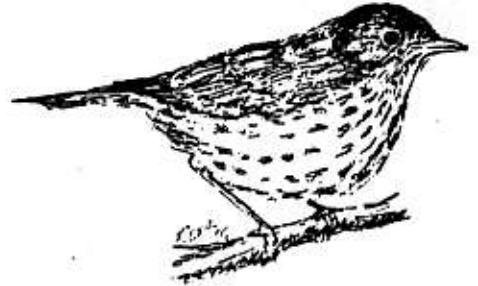
turdus merula.

Common all year round. At least one pair are known to have nested each year of this survey period.

SONG THRUSH

turdus philomelos.

Not as common as it once was. The song thrush can still be seen on occasions throughout the year.



REDWING

turdus iliacus.

Smaller and darker than the song thrush (t. philomelos) with red flanks and under wings. The redwing is another of our winter visitors from Scandinavia. Redwings can be seen feeding in the bush screens by the bunded pools and also along the nature trail. They sometimes mix with the flocks of fieldfares.

MISTLE THRUSH

turdus viscivorus.

The largest of our resident thrushes. The mistle thrush can be quite aggressive during the breeding season and will even attack humans if they get too close to the nest site. They like to deliver their song from as high up in a tree as possible. When they are feeding they stand tall and run in short bursts across the open ground. Mistle thrushes can be seen on any visit to the reserve.

REED WARBLER

acrocephalus scirpaceus.

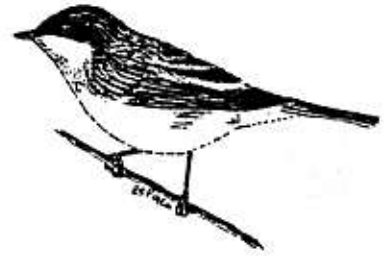
A summer visitor from Africa arriving here during April and staying until September. The reed warbler is a pale brown bird with white underparts. It is usually heard more often than seen as it chatters harshly from the cover of a reed bed. Four were recorded on the reserve on 13th. December 1992.



LESSER WHITETHROAT

sylvia curruca.

Similar to the whitethroat (*s. communis*) but dumpier and with a shorter tail, less brown in the wings and darker cheeks. The voice is a single note, rapid rattle followed by a short, fast warble. There have been two reports for the reserve during the survey period, one in July 1992 and the other in April 1993.



WHITETHROAT

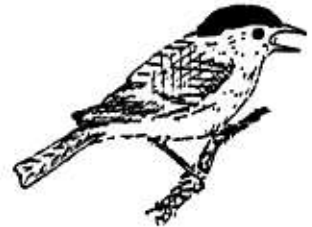
sylvia communis.

A slim warbler with a long white sided tail, brown wings and a buff breast tinged with pink. The whitethroat can often be heard singing from within the cover of brambles or nettles. It is a summer visitor from Africa. The only record for this period was of one bird seen on 27th. April 1993.

BLACKCAP

sylvia attricapilla.

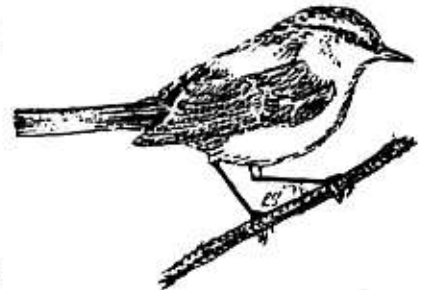
A small warbler about the size of a robin. Both sexes are brownly grey but the female has a brown cap where that of the male is black. The song is not unlike that of the garden warbler (*s. borin*) but in shorter bursts. One bird heard singing during 5th. May 1992 is the only record for this period.



CHIFF-CHAFF

phylloscopus collybita.

During spring and early summer the chiff-chaff is easily identified by its song, but when the singing becomes less frequent and identification is purely by sight then the chiff-chaff and willow warbler (*p. trochilus*) are nearly impossible to tell apart. Points to look out for are a more all over olive brown and buff, shorter wing points and dark legs. Chiff-chaffs are regular visitors to the reserve. They begin to arrive in mid March and stay until October. Some have been known to over winter.



WILLOW WARBLER

phylloscopus trochilus.

Similar to the chiff-chaff (p.collybita) but more green-brown above and yellow below. It also has pinkish legs. As with the chiff-chaff the willow warbler is a common visitor during spring and summer.

LONG TAILED TIT

aegithalos caudatus.

A small, dumpy bird with a long tail. The long tailed tit often stays in family groups and can be seen flitting and feeding along a row of hedges. Their call is a persistent, and thin "swee-swee swee". Numbers vary but there was one count of ten on 10th. December 1992 and one count of twenty on 15th. November 1993.



BLUE TIT

parus caeruleus.

Resident throughout the year on the reserve. Most often seen in the trees along the nature trail and the screens for the bunded pools.



GREAT TIT

parus major.

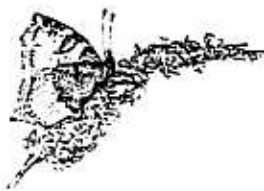
Larger than the blue tit (p. caeruleus). The great tit is also present throughout the year in the same habitat. Notice that the male has a more pronounced black line down his middle.



MAGPIE

pica pica.

The magpie can be seen on any visit to the reserve either singly or in numbers up to twenty.



ROOK

corvus frugilegus.

A large glossy black crow with a bare face patch and a slender bill. The rook can be seen on most visits to the reserve. It walks and hops across the open areas. Groups of up to thirty birds have been recorded.



CARRION CROW

corvus corone.

Slightly larger than the rook (c.frugilegus) the carrion crow can also be seen on most visits to the reserve but in lesser numbers. The carrion crow is prone to albinism and birds have been recorded as having white patches on their wings and backs.



RAVEN

corvus corax.

The largest of our resident crow family. The raven has a heavy bill and a wedge shaped tail that is very distinctive when the bird is in flight. Ravens are seen from time to time over the reserve. One adult with four young was noted in June 1992 and a family of ravens was recorded in 1996.

STARLING

sternus vulgaris.

Flocks of over 1000 birds have been regularly recorded on the reserve. Starlings can be seen at any time of the year. They are mainly sedentary but there is an influx of continental birds during the winter.



HOUSE SPARROW

passer domesticus.

A few of these small brown and buff birds can be seen regularly in the trees along the nature trail and also in the bunded pools area as well as the bushes that line the fields. The male has a grey cap, brown nape and a black bib. The female is a duller two tone buff.

TREE SPARROW

passer montanus.

Becoming more scarce over the last few years. Four were seen in the trees by the old power station entrance in August 1992 with small numbers also being reported from the bunded pool area during 1996. Both the male and the female are similar in appearance. They have a brown crown, small black bib and a black cheek spot.

CHAFFINCH

fringilla coelebs.

The peak count for the period was of 240 birds in September 1992. Chaffinch are our most common finches and can be seen on the reserve at any time during the year. Their numbers are increased during winter by visitors from the continent.

NOTE.

It is always worth a careful check through a wintering flock of chaffinches to see if a brambling (*f. montifringilla*) is present.



BULLFINCH

pyrrhula pyrrhula.

Similar in size to the chaffinch (*f. coelebs*) but dumpier. The male has a striking pinky-red front. Both male and female have a black cap. The female's colour is duller than the male. The bullfinch is mostly silent but their call is a low "tzew-tzew". One pair was seen in the tree screen by the bunded pools in May 1994.

GREENFINCH

carduelis chloris.

Greenfinches have become more common over the last few years and flocks of up to 50 birds are often recorded on the reserve. The male is a bright yellow-green with an olive-green back. The female is much duller with a lot less yellow.



GOLDFINCH

carduelis carduelis.

Goldfinch flocks of between 30 and 40 birds have been regularly recorded on the reserve. They enjoy feeding on the thistle and teasel heads as well as any other seed that is available. Their call is a clear, whistled "sewit-swit-swit".



LINNET

carduelis cannabina.

Linnets are always present on the reserve and it is not uncommon to see flocks of up to 50 as they flit between the open ground and bushes as they feed. The male has a grey head with a red forehead and breast. The female is heavily streaked with no red markings.



REDPOLL

carduelis flammea.

Only one bird has been recorded on the reserve during the period of this survey. The redpoll is smaller than the linnet (c. cannabina) and is heavily streaked brown and black with a black chin and red forehead. It's flight call is a metallic "chee-chee-chee". This bird prefers wooded areas with birch, alders and willow.

YELLOWHAMMER

emberiza citrinella.

A striking yellow finch with chestnut wings and rump. The yellowhammer can be seen on occasions in the bushes between the visitor's centre and the bunded pools. The call is a series of sharp "twik-twiks" ending with a prolonged "shuwee" that fits "a little bit of bread and no cheese".



REED BUNTING

emberiza schoeniclus.

Four birds were noted on the reserve on 13th. December 1994. There have been no other reported sightings since then.

LITTLE EGRET

egretta garzetta.

A small heron like bird with white plumage, black legs and yellow feet. The little egret is more at home on the south coast and the continent. There have been seven separate sightings of single birds over this five year period and one sighting of three birds together on 23rd./24th. August 1995.

