



Issue 164

December 2024

Registered Charity No. 510146

Welcome to the winter edition of the newsletter.

The Committee are pleased to announce that we have a new lease from the landlords which will run until 2030. It has been signed by our DNS trustees and are just waiting for countersignatures from The landlords.

There is nothing to report on the progress of the new proposed carbon capture power station on the site. As you will appreciate the project is still at the consultancy stage and planning permission is some way off as yet. In reality, if it does get the go ahead it will be some years before there are any spades in the ground.

There is a likelihood that the Reserve will be closed in June/July next year as National Grid will be on site replacing the overhead powerlines from the barrier along the track parallel to the railway. We will endeavour to keep you updated on the situation as we get the relevant information.

Could members please re-familiarise themselves with the current DNS standing rules on page 5. Thank you.

We have a request from Dr Glenn Morris:

Does anybody in the Society have a copy of: Birch, R.R., Birtwell, J.M., Done, C., Stokes, E.J., and Walton, G.F. 1968 'The birds of Flintshire'; a checklist of the avifauna of the county, Flintshire Ornithological Society, that we could have a look at?

***** A gentle reminder that membership renewals are due on 31st December
The fees remain unchanged for next year. *****

Alan Smethurst

Chairman's report

This year has flown by due to Uniper's carbon capture programme. Highlights on the Reserve this year have been the Avocets nesting again even though the Ash Pool island had vanished due to heavy rainfall. Also the sighting of Spoonbill and up to fifty Little and Great white Egrets. We also had the return of a resident Peregrine which can be seen atop the pylon by the Leadbrook outfall entrance to the reserve.

Last year I mentioned that Bill Dickinson was stepping down from organising the field trips but I am pleased to say he has changed his mind and will continue planning them.

Many thanks to Bill for the field trips, especially the day at Leighton Moss where Osprey, Spoonbill and Bittern were seen.

Thanks to the rest of the committee for their help especially dealing with the Uniper meetings.

May I wish you all happy and productive days on the Reserve and a merry Christmas and happy new year.

Keith Davies (Chair)

Frodsham and Weaver Bend Aug 17th

Frodsham marshes at the confluence of the River Weaver, Manchester Ship Canal and the Mersey estuary, was an excellent area of sludge-beds but unfortunately many are dry with only number six bed holding water, however they still attract a wide range of both breeding and wintering birds, with a fair selection of rarities The embankments afford good views of the massed ranks of waders and duck on the Mersey estuary.

Seven members met on the motorway bridge above the M56, from where we headed to our first stop, Number six bed. As we walked along the track above the sludge-bed we saw ravens, crows, sand martins and a charm of goldfinches. Unfortunately, the water level was so high as to completely cover the mud on the western edge leaving only mallards, shovelers, teal, tufted ducks and little grebes on the water.

From the lagoon we got back into the cars to drive to Marsh Farm which is on the side of the Manchester Ship Canal, to the canal bank from where we were able to overlook the Mersey Estuary which gave us distant views of curlews, shelducks, oystercatchers, cormorants and gulls including great black backed, lesser black-backed, herring and black-headed. At the junction of the River Weaver and the Ship Canal were two white egrets alongside a grey heron, which was a good indicator of their size. A hopper dredger (maritime vessel) was plying along the canal so other than a hundred Canada geese, two great crested grebes and a few mallards the waterway was quiet.



We returned to the parked cars before driving through Frodsham to the parking area for the Weaver Bend. On the way to the river, we noted a small group of lapwings in one of the fields. Closer to the bend was a small body of water with black-tailed godwits, a green sandpiper flew in but didn't land but its manoeuvre sent up a group of ten snipe into the air. On reaching the river we saw that the water level was high, again no mud to be seen. We settled down for lunch and a vole emerged from its tunnel, which just happened to be in the bank Alan Smethurst was sat on having his lunch.



Butterflies seen on the day were speckled wood, gatekeeper, meadow brown and green veined white. Only thirty-three species of bird were seen on the trip, a lot of common birds missing, is it a sign of the times? A big thank you to the members who turned out for days birding.

Bill Dickinson.

Bird report

'The right person in the right place at the right time event' occurred in August of this year. Geoff Robinson, an experienced birder, was carrying out a routine count of wetland birds on the reserve. Looking through the Black-tailed godwits he spotted a smaller version that looked a little darker. It was saying to him **'Hudsonian godwit'** a rare American vagrant. Before he could say anything, it flew off. His suspicions were confirmed when the same bird was picked up at Burton mere wetlands and confirmed as a **Hudsonian godwit**, a first for Wales. Many birders connected with the bird over the following days as it became a regular visitor on Oakenholt marsh.



Photo: *Mike Pollard*

June

Lesser whitethroat, 40 Common tern, 50 Bar-tailed godwit, Sanderling, 2 family groups of Little grebe, Sedge warbler, Reed bunting, Swift, Swallow, House martin, Sand martin, Blackcap, Rook, 28 Avocet, 400 Mallard, Reed warbler, Ruddy shelduck, 33 Redshank, Coot with young, Moorhen with chicks, Nuthatch, 300 Black-tailed godwits, 700 shelduck, Common redstart, 4 greenshank.

July

8 Chiffchaff, 100 lapwing, 55 Little egrets, 1500 Redshanks, Common redstart, 6 Common sandpiper, 2 Spotted redshanks, 60 Avocets (confirmed breeding of 4 chicks), 20 Greenshank, Teal, 5 Whimbrel, Dunlin, Goosander, Tufted duck, Peregrine, Linnet, Stonechat, Kingfisher, Knot, Turnstone, Curlew, 3000 Black-tailed godwit, family of 6 Tufted ducks, **Garganey (M Pollard)**, Hobby, Marsh Harrier, 20 Greenfinch, 14 Pied wagtail.

August

28 Greenshank, 20 Curlew, 8 Great egrets, 40 Avocet, 17 Spotted redshanks, 4000 Black-tailed godwits, 200 Dunlin, 240 Knot, 2800 Black-headed gulls, Sparrowhawk, **Hudsonian godwit (G Robinson)**, 100 Little egret, 21 Ringed plover, 5 Turnstone, 4 Ruff, Grey wagtail, Water rail, Merlin, Wheatear, Reed warbler, Snipe, 2 Curlew sandpipers, 400 Teal.

September

13 Sanderling, 24 Spotted redshanks, 35 Greenshank, Wheatear, Marsh harrier, Kestrel, Peregrine, 4000 Black-tailed godwit, 1500 Teal, Merlin, Black tern, 12 Little grebe, 6 Common sandpiper, 300 Pink-footed geese, Avocet, 10 Stonechat, 2000 Redshank.

Peter & Sue Haslem (Recorders)

Hilbre Island Sept 21st

Hilbre island is the largest of an archipelago of three sandstone outcrops sitting in the mouth of the Dee estuary approximately two miles off the Wirral coastline. The two largest of the islands remain dry at high water.

The two mile walk over to the island didn't produce a lot of sightings, passing Cormorants, a couple of feeding Little Egrets and a smattering of gulls. From Middle Eye we had good views of a large colony of Grey seals hauled out on the Hoyle bank awaiting the oncoming tide.



Shirley Bain



Shirley Bain

Once the day visitors had left, we had the island to ourselves. As it is a relatively small area we wandered to the many vantage points on the cliff edges and recorded Sanderling, Wheatear, Dunlin, Turnstone, Knot, Oystercatcher, and Eider duck. The numerous Rock Pipits entertained us all day with many close encounters and the resident Kestrel made regular appearances throughout the day.

We had the company of a good number of swallows wheeling above the garden areas around the cottages along with a few House Martins. There were also sightings of Wren, Blackbird, Linnet and Robin. No sign of the Yellow-browed Warbler that was recorded (and ringed) the previous day.

As high water arrived more and more birds were coming into the two islands. Huge numbers of Oystercatcher (they had been counted at 8000/10000 the previous day). The Eider ducks were moving about with the incoming tide, but we reckoned there were four pair. Great Crested Grebe and Scoter were spotted close in to the island and we had incredibly close-up views of Ringed Plover, Turnstone and Dunlin on the sandstone rocks. Over the high tide the inquisitive heads of Grey seals were constantly popping up.

The walk back to West Kirby was uneventful apart from a small number of Brent geese on the fast-emerging rocks. Arriving back at the car park we were greeted by the first rumble of thunder from the predicted storm for late afternoon.....so good timing.



Many thanks to all the members who turned out for a very enjoyable days birding.

Alan Smethurst

DNS STANDING RULES

Always sign-in and include names of all guests. This is agreed with our landlord Uniper who need to be aware who is on site in case of an emergency. Please carry your reserve permit and do not be offended when asked for it.

All groups must be signed in and include a list of all individuals. Cars on site **MUST** be kept to a minimum.

The Constitution allows you to bring up to three guests twice a year.

Dogs are **NOT** allowed on the reserve with the exception of care assisted.

The reserve is closed every Monday night from 17.00 hrs to 06.00 hrs Tuesday morning.

Please keep to roads and paths. Do not enter the fields and salt marsh or climb the grass banks around the car park at West hide.

Never access or leave the reserve via RSPB Oakenholt or via the salt marsh towards Flint Bridge.

Observe the 15-mph speed limit.

Park sensibly so as not to restrict access to emergency vehicles or block any entrance or exits. Be considerate of other reserve users. Do not park on planted area in front of Dee hide.

This is a non-smoking site. Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the reserve.

Avoid disturbing roosting birds. Use hides and screens available. Follow good fieldcraft, keep noise disturbance to a minimum and do not break the skyline by climbing the grassy banks.

Make sure you close and lock all windows and doors. Keep hides tidy and take all rubbish home with you.

Do not pick wildflowers, fungi or berries.

Rare bird and unusual sightings must not be reported on social media or public websites directly or indirectly as this is a closed site. Such reporting encourages access by unauthorised and unmanaged opportunists.

In the event of an emergency follow the directions given by security personnel. If alarm sounds, please leave reserve calmly and quickly. Then log out so as not to put the emergency services at greater risk looking for you on site.

Contact Uniper security **01244 894065** if you need Emergency services. With your name and location and nature of help needed.

This is a nature reserve, and you are expected to respect the welfare of all wildlife and the safety and enjoyment of all users. Waders and Wildfowl use the reserve as a high tide roost and their disturbance must be avoided through good fieldcraft. By keeping to paths you will not stand on our areas managed for wildflowers.

Fungi foray Wepre Park 20th Oct

Wepre Park is situated in a steep sided, mainly deciduous woodland covering some 160 acres in Connah's Quay, Flintshire. Once home to Wepre Hall and unusually built in woodlands the remains of a 13th century castle built by the Princes of Wales..



Eleven of us met on a drizzly autumn morning. I was pleased to see so many had turned up (including members from as far afield as West Kirby) - especially, as a storm with high winds had been predicted for the day. Thankfully, the weather was not as bad as expected, although we did spend some time in the morning huddled around umbrellas sheltering under trees. The fungi were not as abundant as we would have liked but with so many keen fungal treasure hunters we soon started to find some.

We found a variety of both basidiomycetes (they are the spore droppers) and ascomycetes (fungi that shoot out their spores). Our finds included Peeling Oysterling, Snapping Bonnet (the stem makes an audible snap when pulled apart), Coral Spot, Candlesnuff, Common Bonnet, Jelly Ear, White Brain (has a jelly-like texture), Stump Puffball, Buttercup, Smoky Bracket, Bulbous Honey Fungus, Deer Shield, Sulphur Tuft, Clouded Funnel, Wood Blewit, Beech Woodward, Rooting Shank, Bleeding Conifer Crust (turns rusty red when scratched), Ochre Brittlegill, Glistening Inkcap and Chicken of the Woods. These represent a range of different fungi family groups.

After a break for lunch we headed over to the far side of the brook. The sun came out and many of us, dressed for the worst, were soon feeling a little too warm and started shedding layers.

The fungi were more plentiful over there and we found a few uncommon species. Our additional finds included Shaggy Inkcap, Lemon Disco, Fiery Milkcap (exudes a milky substance that is hot and peppery on the tongue - Nb spat out after tasting!), Yellow Stainer (an Agaricus which turns chrome yellow when the flesh is scratched), Jellybaby (unusual and distinctive looking), Snowy Waxcaps, The deceiver, Splitpea Shanklet, Brittle Cinder, Beechleaf Parachute (a tiny thing in beech litter) and White Saddle (a very strange looking mushroom with a distorted cap and stem).

The group were all engaged, interested and keen to learn more about fungi. The event was a bit of a departure from the usual DNS field trips but everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and, we hope, many left knowing a little more about the Kingdom of Fungi than they knew before. With the help and expertise of my co-leaders Adrian Jenkins and Keith (Kipper) Davies (DNS Chair) we managed to identify the majority of what we found. Around fifty species named altogether. Alan Smethurst and I took the photographs showing a selection of our finds on the day. Thanks to all that joined us, helping to make it such a pleasant foray.



SMOKEY BRACKET



JELLYBABY



FIERY MILKCAP



YELLOW DISCO



SULPHUR TUFT



WOOD BLEWIT

Karen Garnett

RSPB Old Moor – Dearne Valley Nov 30th



RSPB Old Moor was created on an industrial landscape that was previously at the heart of the Yorkshire Coalfield, coal mines, pithead gear, railway sidings and colliery waste have been turned into a haven for wintering wildfowl and bitterns.

We began the day in the extensive garden area, Greenfinch, Blackbird, Robin, Reed Bunting, Pheasant, Dunnock, Bullfinch, Great and Blue Tit were present.



We set off along the Green Lane Loop which covers the southern side of the reserve. The first hide that overlooks the Mere was full of ducks Shovelers, Tufted Ducks, Gadwall, Wigeon and Teal. A Cetti's Warbler was heard calling to one side of the hide. In the distance to the left of the hide were three immature Mute Swans and a Heron, whilst to the right there was an island with Cormorants, Herring Gulls, Great Black-Backed Gulls and Black-headed Gulls.

We had terrific views of a pair of Marsh Harriers which were flying at the back of the wader scrape, with the female landing and spending quite a bit of time on the ground.

Returning to the centre for lunch we saw Pied Wagtail, Common Gull, Great White Egret, Shelduck, Little Egret, Lapwing and Dunlin.

After lunch in the courtyard, from where we had a Sparrowhawk fly by, we set out for the reed bed area which occupies about a third of the site and forms the northern boundary. The walk didn't reveal sadly any Bitterns or Bearded Tits, however we watched a Peregrine which was perched high on a pylon which provided it with a full view of the reserve and the last bird, fiftieth, of the day was a Barn Owl that gave a nice view before dropping down behind the reeds.



RSPB Old Moor is a relatively young reserve and certainly worth a revisit, possibly in the spring. Many thanks to those members that turned up on the day.

Bill Dickinson

Financial statement 2023-2024

Deeside Naturalists Society Accounts for the year ended 31st October 2024 Registered Charity No. 510146

ACCOUNTING STATEMENT Receipts and payments basis

<u>Income</u>	<u>2023/2024</u>	<u>2022/2023</u>
Bank Interest	871.93	107.89
Donations	454.00	498.38
Subscriptions	5273.50	5134.00
Gift Aid Tax Rebate	972.70	810.80
Visits	22.00	61.60
Total Income	<u>7594.13</u>	<u>6612.67</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>2023/2024</u>	<u>2022/2023</u>
Insurance	96.00	215.12
Printing	721.00	1117.00
Postage	892.99	1081.87
Stationery	140.54	133.75
New keys / locks	490.26	393.48
Bird Food	612.96	800.47
Lease	0.00	1.40
WOS membership	100.00	0.00
Web Hosting	410.57	44.87
Equipment	19.97	35.94
Field trips	50.00	0.00
Repairs & Maintenance	623.33	87.78
MOJO membership a/c	175.00	140.00
Stripe	158.73	145.09
AGM	41.50	0.00
Talks	150.00	0.00
Total Payments	<u>4682.85</u>	<u>4196.77</u>
Balance for Year	2911.28	2415.90
Cash funds last year end	23671.18	21023.10
Transfer from Key Deposit Money	83.00	232.00
Cash funds this year end	<u>26499.46</u>	<u>23671.00</u>

Bob Lee, Treasurer

Field events 2024/25

December Sun 15th, BEDDMANARCH BAY AND INLAND SEA.

Beddmanarch Bay is a SSSI, the site comprises the area of coastal saltmarshes, mudflats, and shallow coastal water. The Inland Sea is adjacent to the bay but isolated by the A55. Meet at Penrhos Coastal Park at 10.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

January Sat 11th LIANFAIRFECHAN AND THE SPINNIES for winter seabirds and waders. Meet in the beach car park by the Pavillion Café, off junction 15, A55 at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

February Sat 22nd NORTH WALES COAST a day's birding along the north Wales coast looking at winter birds. Meet at the DNS barrier at 8.30am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

March Sat 22nd, RSPB LEIGHTON MOSS. Spring migrants and woodland birds. Bring RSPB cards. Meet at the Allen and Morcambe hide car park, off New Rd, Wharton at 10.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

April Sat 12th LLYN COED Y DINAS AND DOLYDD HAFREN NATURE RESERVE. These two reserves provide a variety of habitats from a disused quarry to a flood plain with a wealth of wildlife. Meet at GR SJ 223052, post code SY21 8RP, at the end of the Welshpool by-pass on the road to Powys castle at 10.00am. Contact Keith Davis on 01978 760353 for more details

May Sat 24th WOOLSTON EYES, The principal UK breeding site for Black necked Grebes. Meet at the eastern end of Thelwall lane. Post code WA4 1PD at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

June Thurs 19th LLANDEGLA FOREST. Meet at 8.00pm for 8.30pm start in the car park at One Planet Adventure. Llandegla visitor centre. Grid ref: SJ 219519, post code: LL11 3AA. It is a fairly demanding walk which takes about 40 minutes. Contact Barry Lynes 07923128124 for more details.

July Thurs 3rd RSPB SOUTH STACK AND CEMLYN BAY. Spectacular nesting seabirds extravaganza. Bring RSPB membership card. Meet in the café car park at 9.30am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

September Sun 14th CONNAH'S QUAY RESERVE. Members day, high tide watch for returning waders as they migrate south. Meet Field Study Centre at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

October Thurs 16th. CONWY RSPB AND ESTUARY. Bring RSPB membership card. Meet at Conwy reserve car park at 9.30am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

November Thurs 20th. DENHALL LANE , NESS AND RSPB BURTON MERE WETLANDS. Marshland birds and more. Meet at Denhall Lane, Burton, Cheshire Grid ref: SJ303749 at 9.30. Bring RSPB membership card.. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details

December Thur 11th. MARBURY COUNTRY PARK. Woodpeckers and woodland birds, wintering Bittern and other waders. Meet at the car park (pay and display) (SJ652764 at 9.00am. Contact Bill Dickinson 07968438121 for more details.

Please carshare whenever possible. Notices will be put on DNS Facebook page and the DNS website prior to the meetings.

Bill Dickinson

Committee members for the coming year

Keith Davies	(chair)
Ian Spence	(Secretary)
Bob Lee	(treasurer)
John Briggs	(membership secretary)
Peter Haslem	(recorder)
Bill Dickinson	(field trips)
Alan Smethurst	(newsletter)
David Colton	
Noel Hughes	
Mike Pollard	

Non Committee

Bob Must	(web master)
Ron Plummer	(facebook admin)

Limestone Pavements

There are something like 3,300 hectares of exposed limestone pavement in the UK, however this figure would be far greater if it hadn't been for the destruction of large areas for use as weathered limestone for gardens.

The pavement is basically a slab of carboniferous Dalradian and Durness limestone which is formed into blocks (clints) surrounded by fissures of varying depths (grykes). The slab would have been created by the scouring action of glaciers and the grykes over time would have formed by rainwater running along any weak spots or cracks over thousands of years, dissolving away the limestone. The surface of the pavement supports very little vegetation but look into the grykes and there is a profusion of ferns and other plant life in the damp environment.

DNS Art Group

We are a small group of members who enjoy painting together each month. We paint in various mediums and gain stimulation and encouragement from each other.

If you would like to join us, you would be most welcome. Our meetings are on the second Thursday of the month in the Field Study Centre from 1-30 until 3-30 pm.
Contact Kay Mattocks on 01244 821810

Digital Media

Web site: www.deenats.org.uk

Email address: webeditor@deenats.org.uk

Facebook: MEMBERS OF DEESIDE NATURALIST SOCIETY