

A large flock of white birds, likely terns, is captured in flight against a clear blue sky. The birds are densely packed in the upper two-thirds of the frame, creating a sense of movement and activity. Below them, a dark, sandy beach is visible, with a few birds resting on the ground. The overall scene is bright and dynamic, showcasing a natural habitat.

**The Birds of Connah's Quay  
Nature Reserve and  
Oakenholt Marsh**

**2<sup>nd</sup> edition**

**Glenn E. Morris**

# **The Birds of Connah's Quay Nature Reserve (CQNR) and RSPB Oakenholt Marsh (1975-2025)**

**A history of the first 50 years**

**by Glenn E. Morris with layout by Ian M Spence**

**April 2026**

This book is intended partly as a historical document, but also as a guide for present-day birdwatchers at CQNR. Please note that all references to the "Reserve" for bird recording purposes in this book include all land accessible to Society members, from the Entrance Gate onwards, including farmed land up to the railway line, visible areas of Power Station buildings, the river and revetment and RSPB Oakenholt Marsh (see map below), whether or not the land has any protected status.

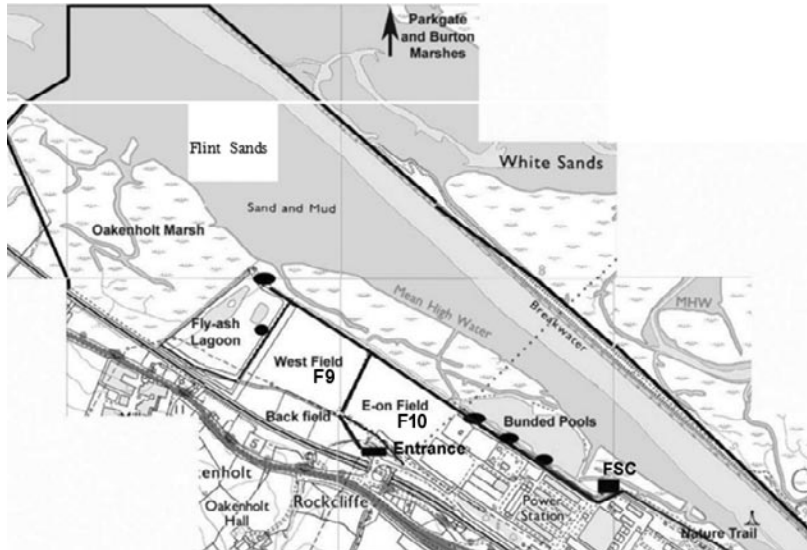
Access to CQNR, its five bird hides and other facilities is available 24/7 (with minor exceptions) to members of the Deeside Naturalists Society, and by appointment for non-members. Membership details, application forms, annual reports and newsletters can be found at [www.deenats.org.uk](http://www.deenats.org.uk). The RSPB Reserve of Oakenholt Marsh can be viewed from the West Hide at CQNR.

The book is based mainly on logbook records from the five hides on the Reserve and Annual Reports/Newsletters published by the Society, but other sources of information include Cofnod, RSPB, BTO WeBS high tide wildfowl and wader counts, Clwyd/North East Wales Bird Reports and sightings published by [www.deeestuary.co.uk](http://www.deeestuary.co.uk). Mr. Colin Steward, son of Power Station Superintendent, the late Mr Keith Steward, has kindly allowed me to use documents and photographs of the early history of the Reserve from his father's collection. The names of individuals who contributed bird records and counts are recorded in both DNS and North East Wales Bird Reports. I thank Ian Spence, Mike Pollard and Peter Haslem for corrections and improvements to the final manuscript

This book describes over 250 bird species that have been recorded on the Reserve, including "escapes". It is divided into three parts: a general introduction precedes the Systematic List which is followed by a more detailed account of conservation efforts over the years. Brief accounts of Butterflies and Flora are appended.

Many records of rare birds were submitted to BBRC (British Birds Rarities Committee) or the Welsh Rare Birds Panel (WRBP) for adjudication and accepted. Historical rarities that stayed for over a day and were logged by several known observers are included, even if no evidence of submission to BBRC/WRBP could be found.

**Cover photo: Needle in a Haystack. Spot the Hudsonian Godwit among the Black-tailed  
Godwit flock: Sam Northwood**



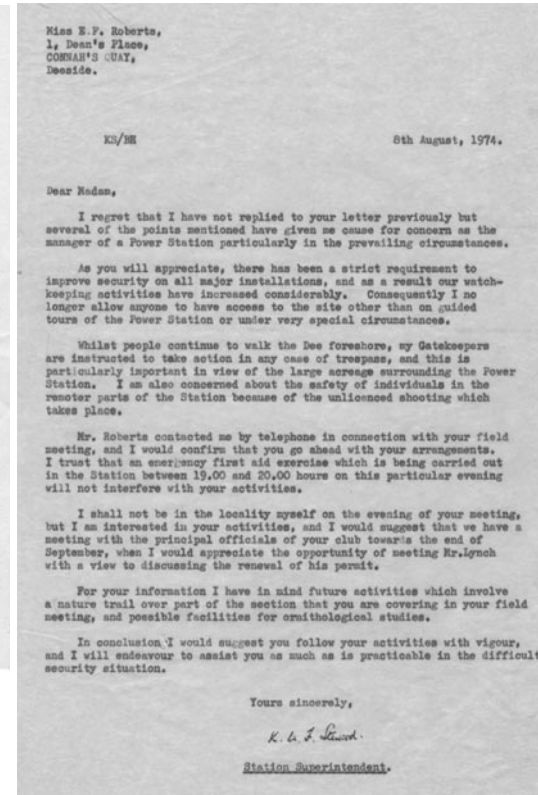
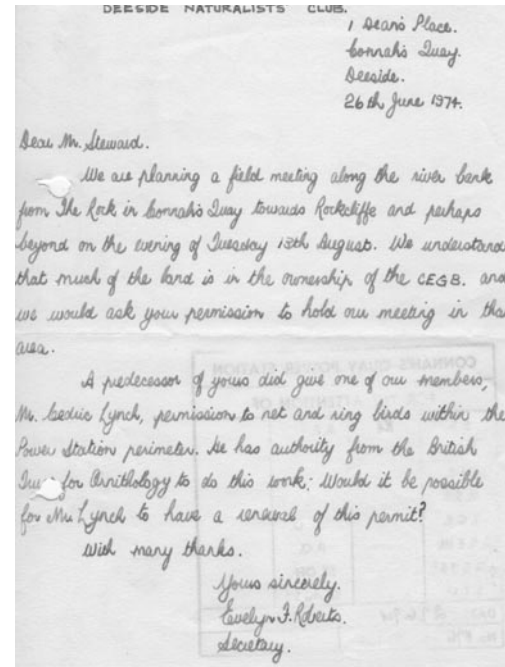
Black rectangles on the map show the entrance gate and the Field Study Centre. Black ellipses show the 5 Bird Hides. There are car parks at the Field Study Centre and the fly-ash lagoon and parking places elsewhere.

Nomenclature (names you may find on older publications): Field now occupied by Gas Power Station = F11; East Grazing Field = E-on Field = F10; West Grazing Field = Hughie's Field = part of F9 (Hughie died in 2013 and his ashes were scattered on the marsh); Mitigation Area = Wetland Meadow (part of F9) plus Fly-ash Lagoon (P12).

### A Prehistory of Birdwatching on the Flintshire Dee

The Dee estuary was made into a canal from Connah's Quay to Chester in 1737, shifting the flow of water towards the Welsh coast. This shift was exacerbated by the construction in 1860 of the Training wall or Revetment, which remains an important feature of CQNR to this day. In the 1960s and early 1970s, most birdwatching on the Welsh Dee was done in an area north of the revetment known as "Shotton Marshes" or "Shotton Pools" which appears to correspond to present-day Cop Hole pool and the MOD firing range, probably extending to Burton Mere Border Pool (acquired much later by RSPB), Shotwick to the NW and Shotton Steelworks pools to the West. This area has an exciting avifauna, largely chronicled by John Raines *et al* in the Cheshire Bird Reports of the period; an act of piracy by England, commendable in view of the poor state of published bird recording in Flintshire at the time. The CEGB (Central Electricity Generating Board) owned the marshes south of the R. Dee and built the original coal-fired Power Station there in 1954. There was no public access until the formation of the Deeside Naturalists' Society and its remarkable collaboration with keen bird-watcher, Mr Keith Steward, who was also Superintendent of the Power Station, which led to the formation of the Connah's Quay Nature Reserve (CQNR) on the site in 1974. It all started with a letter from DNS Secretary, Evelyn Roberts, to Keith Steward.

Here (on p.4) we have the earliest preserved checklist of birds seen on a walk along the Dee foreshore on CEGB land on Aug 13<sup>th</sup> 1974, as recorded by DNS Secretary, Evelyn Roberts. At this time, there were no bunded pools and no fly-ash lagoon. Although the only wildfowl were Shelduck and Mallard, the waders were more or less what you would expect to see 50 years later, including Spotted Redshank,



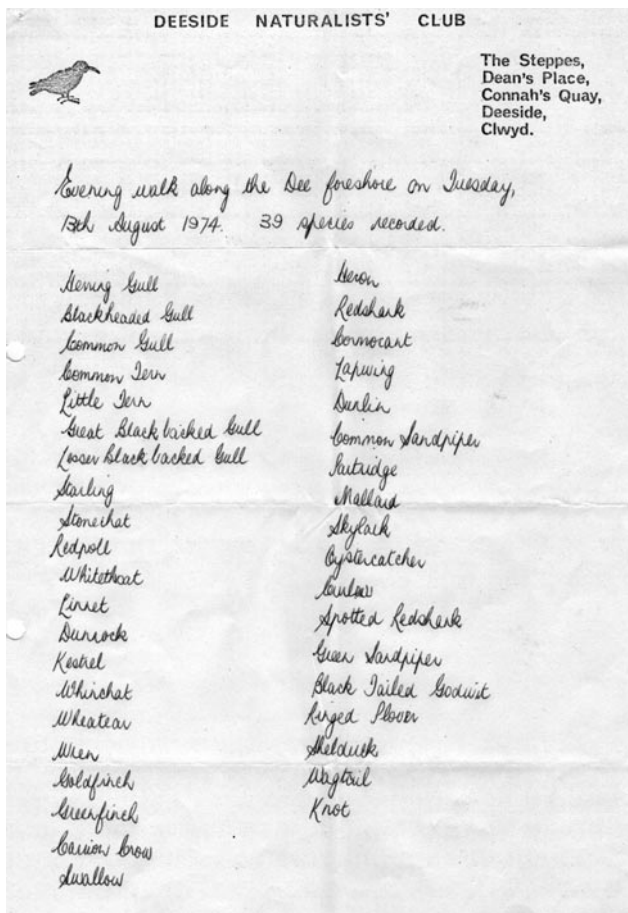
### The Letter and the Reply, June 1974 (letters courtesy of Mr. Colin Steward)

Green Sandpiper and Knot. Both Little Tern and Ringed Plover were seen more frequently in the 1970s than today. The presence of Whinchat, Wheatear, Stonechat and Grey Partridge on the list (still seen, but less often, these days) does illustrate the habitats available on CEGB land at that time.

Apart from Raymond and Evelyn, others who played a role in early development of DNS (many of them no longer with us) were Oswald (Ozzie) Davies, Hazel Jones, Julian Weldrick and Cedric Lynch, while avid contributors to early bird recording included Thelma Sykes, Joan Davidson, Geoff Robinson and Colin Bennett.

### How to Find Birds on the Reserve

The factors affecting which birds are likely to be found are the season, the time of day, the state of the tide and the weather. Most wintering wildfowl and wader species build up in numbers from August and decline rapidly in March. Late July to early October, and to a lesser extent April-May, are best for passage migrants. May and June are the best months for watching nesting birds. Early mornings and late evenings can be productive as birds move to and from roosting sites. High tides ("spring" tides) also bring waders that have been feeding on the estuary closer to the observation hides, though closest views are usually obtained 2-3 hours before the tide. Sea birds often come upstream with the tides, especially if NW gales bring autumn passage birds from the mouth of the estuary. Heavy snowfalls in the hills will sometimes bring unusual birds to the marsh and fields. The entrance to the Reserve can



The first checklist of birds from the site, 13 August 1974, recorded by the Secretary, Evelyn Roberts.

numbers, gulls, wildfowl and sea-birds on the river, Peregrine on the pylons, extensive views (with a good telescope) of Parkgate and Burton marshes, "sea-watching" during NW gales). The barbed wire fences often have chats and finches (including Twite in winter) while Rock Pipits and Kingfisher occur around the hide in winter. The side path that runs down to the meadow hide also leads to a path along the railway line (Collared Dove, warblers) to the edge of Oakenholt Marsh. The right-hand road from the helipad leads towards the bunded pool and its three hides. The channel half-way along is well worth a look (Grey Heron, ducks and waders). Approach the first hide slowly to check out the feeders for woodpeckers, finches and Stock Dove. The middle hide is usually the most productive and should be scanned carefully for Greenshank, Spotted Redshank and Snipe, plus large Redshank flocks on migration and the occasional Kingfisher in winter. Greenshank often use the banks on the far right side of this pool. At the time of writing, the final pool, visible from the East Hide, has not been maintained and is overgrown by marsh vegetation, but the gutter beyond attracts herons and egrets and can be viewed from the Field Study Centre. In 2018, the Reserve entrance was found to be a good location for visible passerine migration (following the railway line) in the very early morning.

be productive [check the pylons (Peregrine, Raven), the treetops along the railway (thrushes) and the hedgerow downhill (Jays, finches)]. The paved track to the new "gardener's compound" merits a slow walk, especially in the early morning (warblers, Goldcrest, Bullfinch). The three grazing fields are all worth a look (Curlew, godwits, Jackdaw) as is the road down to the marsh and helipad (winter thrushes, Redstart, Whitethroat). The two roads, left and right, from the helipad to the hides have Wheatear and wagtails during migration and the occasional perched raptor, while the marsh below may have Skylark, pipits and finches. The river ahead is well worth a scan with a telescope at low tide (wildfowl and waders) and the revetment beyond may have birds too. The road to the left leads to the West Hide from which the fly ash lagoon is best viewed (waders, wildfowl, Snipe, Little Ringed Plover, nesting Avocet, grebes, Oystercatcher, warblers, Coot, Moorhen and Black-headed Gull) and Oakenholt Marsh can be seen (roosting waders in large



Keith Steward and the riverside saltmarsh, 1977.

### Summary of Changes in Bird Species during the last 50 years

The birds for which the Reserve is best-known are the visiting wildfowl and waders, on passage or during winter, and these have, for the most part, changed little or actually increased over the years, as the following pages will show.

Some of the changes in other bird populations that have occurred on the Reserve in the last 50 years simply reflect national trends or obvious loss of habitat. Among the birds that were once seen regularly, but have now disappeared, or almost disappeared, are the Turtle Dove (up to 1980), Corn Bunting (up to 1984), Short-eared Owl (up to 1986), Yellowhammer (up to 1987), Little Owl (up to 1989), Black Tern (up to 1994), Cuckoo (up to 1996), Tree Sparrow (up to 2000) and Bewick's Swan (up to 2012). Among the birds that once bred, but are now seen only outside the nesting season, are Snipe (possibly, up to 1980), Whinchat (bred up to 1982), Western Yellow Wagtail (bred up to 1984), Spotted Flycatcher (bred up to 1987), Kestrel (up to 1989), Grey Partridge (up to 1993), Wheatear (bred sporadically, up to 1995), Lapwing (bred sporadically up to 2002) and Peregrine (bred up to 2014). Skylarks, which once nested in large numbers, were last proven to breed in 2000, though singing males are still seen annually. Stonechat bred up to 1980 and have now, after a gap of over 40 years, started nesting again since 2023.

Gains since the 1980s include Moorhen (breeding since 1988), Little Egret (visitor since 1989), Buzzard (visitor since the 1990s), Raven (since 1991), Coot (breeding since 1996), Tufted Duck, Mute Swan, Little Grebe and Canada Goose (all breeding since 1997), Great White Egret (visitor since 2017), Reed Warbler (breeding since 2018), Black-headed Gull (breeding since 2019), Cetti's Warbler (visitor since 2020), Avocet (breeding since 2021) and Sedge Warbler (breeding since 2023). Again these reflect either national trends or improvements to the fly ash lagoon. In terms of numbers, there have been large increases in Canada Goose (since 2001), Whooper Swan (since 2004) and Pink-footed Goose

(since 2011) which also reflect national trends.

### Possible Causes of Changes in Bird Populations.

Factors that affect numbers of birds recorded on the Reserve since 1976 include:

- 1) Real changes in bird numbers using the Dee estuary as a whole.
- 2) Changes in bird distribution on the estuary, with the same total number of birds spending either more or less time on the Reserve.
- 3) Changes in observer frequency and their perception of the Reserve boundaries: presently, all birds east of the railway line to the English border beyond the revetment (White Sands) would be recorded. Visitor frequency by logbook record days was 60% to 1982, increasing to nearly 80% by 1985 and close to 100% at present (very important for raptor populations measured by total number of sightings per year).
- 4) Gains and losses of habitat as detailed in the History above.
- 5) Loss of Rabbits due to *myxomatosis* (nearly 50% decline in UK 1996-2018). First introduced in 1953. Loss of Large Blue butterfly and decimation of Wheatears in southern England after *myxomatosis* shows the profound effect that rabbits can have on wildlife populations. In 1986, Rabbit numbers were very high on the Reserve, and there were several records of Rabbits swimming from the marsh on the rising tide, but *myxomatosis* was also rife. Nowadays, although young rabbits are sometimes seen, one is more likely to see a squirrel or a rat on the Reserve.

### Intruders, Vandalism and the Role of the Rabbit

Visitors to the Reserve in the 1980s will remember that hardly a day passed without the intrusion of local hunters using ferrets and Jack Russell dogs to hunt Rabbits (with frequent side-effects on sheep flocks). Attempts by DNS and the Power Station to stop this are the likely cause of the many cases of vandal damage to the hides and the Field Study Centre. In the winter of 1984/85, for example, Rabbit hunters were damaging the scrub on the Nature Trail. Challenged by Ray Roberts, they refused to leave, claiming their right to hunt with dogs and ferrets. They gave their names and addresses to police who were called and were each later fined £50 + £40 costs. Unfortunately, Rabbits were not the only target: in 1986, a fisherman from Connah's Quay was seen shooting Teal from a boat in the channel in front of West Hide; reported to the Water Bailiff, he was warned that recurrence would lead to prosecution. Although "intruders" are still found occasionally exercising their "right to roam" on the Reserve, vandalism is much less common now, due partly no doubt to regular patrols by Power Station guards, but partly also to the disappearance from the Reserve of both the Rabbit and the grievances of its hunters.

## The Systematic Species List

(Species order is that of the Welsh Ornithological Society, WOS <https://birds.wales/welsh-bird-list/>). Red-listing is based on the Welsh "Birds of Conservation Concern Wales 4" (Johnstone, I.G., Hughes, J., Balmer, D.E., Brenchley, A., Facey, R.J., Lindley, P.J., Noble, D.G. and Taylor, R.C. 2023. Birds of Conservation Concern in Wales 4: the population status of birds in Wales. *Milvus* 2(1): pp.5-38). Note that even common birds on the Reserve may be "listed" if they are clearly in decline nationally.

### Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

GŴYDD DDU

Winter visitor from Siberia (dark-bellied nominate) or from Canada/Svalbard (light-bellied "hrota"). Uncommon on Oakenholt Marsh and the river but absent in some years.

Although many Reserve records did not specify the race, the dark-bellied form seems to have predominated in the early years, the first reserve record being of 2 dark-bellied birds on Nov 12<sup>th</sup> 1982. The first specific "hrota" bird was in May 2009, followed by 2 in Feb 2013, 1 in Oct 2017, 22 on the river on 20/2/19 (the maximum Reserve number), 6 on Oakenholt Marsh on Mar 10<sup>th</sup> 2020 and 4 there on Jan 4<sup>th</sup> 2022. The current predominance of the light-bellied form appears to be due to a dramatic increase since 2010 in the number of Nearctic (Canada/Greenland) birds wintering in Wales.

Years with birds present (**BOLD**) or not recorded (*italics*): **24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

### Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

GŴYDD CANADA

A common breeding resident and winter visitor.

Wintering birds started to appear in the late 1980s, with counts of 16-35 in the 87/88 winter; before then, there were few records and mostly of single birds. The high count of 38 in 1979 was in summer (June 10<sup>th</sup>) and was a flyover that landed beyond the revetment. Maximum winter numbers have exceeded 2000 in most years since 2004, with a high count of 4500 birds on Sep 22<sup>nd</sup> 2009. These massive increases reflect national changes in the UK and especially in Wales.

A pair of Canada Geese have nested on or near the fly-ash lagoon since 1997 and in most years up to 2017 (2 young on May 25<sup>th</sup>). Most recently a pair produced 2 young on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2023.



Barnacle Goose: Peter Haslem

**Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis***GŴYDD WYRAN  
Uncommon winter visitor, probably of UK feral origin (flocks in Lancashire and Cumbria), rather than migrants from Iceland and Norway.

Barnacle Geese were abundant on the Dee estuary 100 years ago, but the first recent record for the Reserve was of a bird present during May 30<sup>th</sup>-June 7<sup>th</sup> 1985. Records became more frequent with larger numbers since 2001. Recorded in every month in 2019, with 14 in Jan.

Years with birds present (**BOLD**) or not recorded (*italics*): 24 23 **22** 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*

GŴYDD LWYD

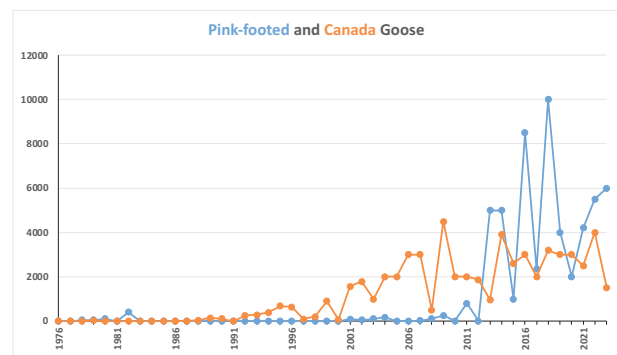
Visitor from local feral populations at any time of year, though winter visitors from Iceland can never be ruled out.

First recorded in April 1983 when 2 birds were present, followed by a single in Oct/Nov 1984, then a few records most years since 1988. The highest count was of 400 flying over the Reserve on Nov 15<sup>th</sup> 1992 (Clwyd Bird Report 1992). Most often seen as 1-3 birds within the Canada Goose flock, but there were larger flocks of 25-50 birds in 2006/07, 2008/09 and 2012. There have been frequent records of a “domestic” Greylag-type goose joining the Canada flocks.

**Pink-footed Goose** *Anser brachyrhynchus*

GŴYDD DROETBINC

Annual winter visitors from Iceland in very large numbers from September to April. International Importance: 5400 National Importance: 5100



Large and increasing numbers now winter on the Dee estuary, so they appear on Oakenholt Marsh more regularly than in earlier years. They virtually disappeared from the Dee in the late 1920s, made a tentative come-back in the 78/79 winter, but only began to increase rapidly on the Reserve in 2013; the graph below illustrates the trends. A flock of 5,000 was actually feeding on Oakenholt Marsh on Dec 16<sup>th</sup> 2014; this was the

closest we came to achieving international importance until it was briefly achieved in March 2022 with 5,500 on Oakenholt Marsh. The very highest West Hide counts of 8,500 on Feb 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and 10,000 on Apr 9<sup>th</sup> 2018 were on the marsh across the river (still in Wales but outside the Reserve).



Pink-footed Goose: Mike Pollard

**White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons* GŴYDD DALCENWEN

A scarce, but regular, winter visitor. Both the nominate European race (pink bill) and the flavirostris Greenland race (orange bill) occur, but are not always distinguished.

The first record was of three adults in flight over the Power Station on Dec 27<sup>th</sup> 1984 and the highest count was a flock of 9 on Mar 5<sup>th</sup> 1989 which included two immatures. Two were present on Oakenholt Marsh from Mar 31<sup>st</sup>-Apr 1<sup>st</sup> 2002 and again in 2005 when two were seen at several places on the Dee during Jan-Mar. The most recent records were of singles on the Marsh on Sep 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012, Mar 5<sup>th</sup> 2015 (Greenland), Feb 1<sup>st</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> 2016 (Greenland). The nominate pink-billed Siberian form was first recorded on Oakenholt Marsh on Oct 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> 2017 and again on Jan 5-28<sup>th</sup> 2023. Other records were 1 on Mar 7<sup>th</sup> 2020, 2 with Pink-feet Dec 12<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> 2021 and 1 on Mar 6<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> 2022. Nationally, both races have declined over the past 50 years.

Years with birds present (**BOLD**) or not recorded (*italics*): 24 23 **22** 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor*

ALARCH DOF

Breeding resident and winter visitor.

Mute Swans were quite uncommon on the Reserve in the early days but records became more frequent from 1987 onwards and a pair nested regularly on the fly-ash lagoon between 1997 and 2010. The fly-ash lagoon became more attractive to nesting Swans after the mitigation work was completed in 1995, but predation reduced the number of surviving cygnets dramatically, apparently because the flightless cygnets were unable to cross the barbed wire fence. They nested again in 2013, raising 7 cygnets, and in 2014, with 5 cygnets. In 2017, a pair on the fly ash lagoon raised 6 young first seen on May 20<sup>th</sup> and 4 cygnets were seen passing through the fence onto Oakenholt Marsh on June 26<sup>th</sup>. A pair raised 3 young in 2018 and 5 young in 2019 and breeding was last recorded in 2021 with 6 young (none survived). Apart from the breeding pair, the size of flocks visiting the Reserve also increased during the late 1990s and appears to be increasing still. The maximum counts were 60 in 2004 and 50 in 2008, although flocks of 20-40 have been recorded several times since 1996. Nationally, numbers increased considerably in the 1990s and 2000s and are now stable.

**Bewick's Swan** *Cygnus columbianus*

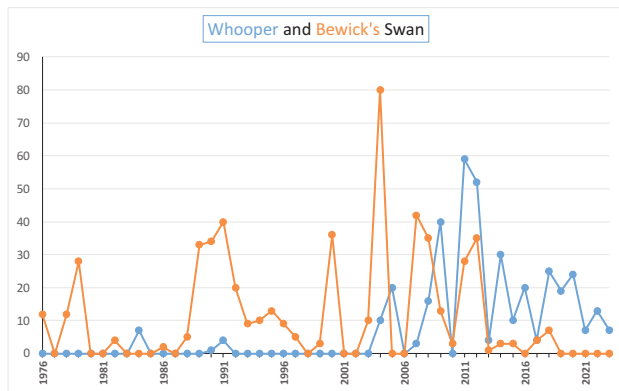
ALARCH BEWICK

Very scarce winter visitor from Siberia. **RED-LISTED**

Numbers recorded in Reserve logbooks have always been erratic, but have declined dramatically since 2012. The highest counts have been of flocks visible across the river on White Sands, including the largest flock of 40-80 birds present between Dec 29<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> 2004. Most records have been between November and mid-March and the record of 6 on Apr 17<sup>th</sup> 2011 was unusually late. The most recent records were 4 on Feb 10<sup>th</sup> 2017 and 7 in Jan 2018.

**Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*  
*Uncommon, but regular, winter visitor from Iceland.*

ALARCH Y GOGLEDD



Records of Whooper Swans have shown a clear increase in recent years. The first record was of a sick bird rescued on Jan 3<sup>rd</sup> 1984. Seven more were seen that year on Nov 14<sup>th</sup> and one young bird stayed on the fly-ash lagoon during Nov 24<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>. There were few subsequent records for 20 years until 10 birds turned up on Dec 31<sup>st</sup> 2004 but since then they have appeared regularly, though briefly, in winter with a



Whooper Swan: Mike Pollard

maximum of 40 on Feb 14<sup>th</sup> 2009. Comparison of the two graphs shows how Bewick's were seen more often than Whoopers in the 1990s and how this has been reversed in favour of Whoopers since 2010.

**Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiaca*  
*Occasional visitor in small numbers.*

GŴYDD YR AIIFFT

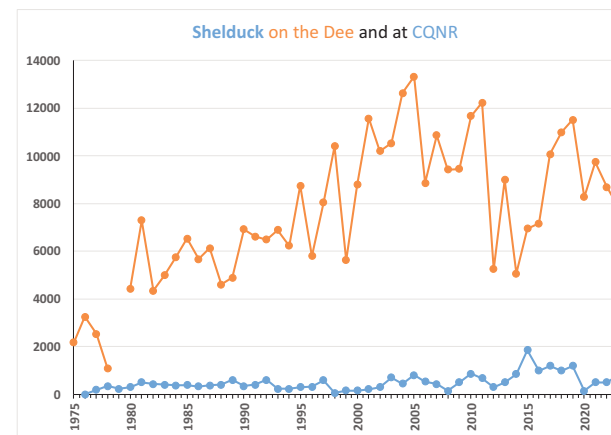
This species, native to Africa, is well-established as a breeding bird in eastern England. Records of 1-2 birds visiting the Reserve in years in **boldface** below.

24 23 22 21 20 **19 18** 17 16 **15 14** 13 12 11 10 09 08 **07 06 05** **04** 03 02 **01** 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93  
 92 91 90 **89 88 87 86** 85 **84 83** 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*  
*Passage migrant, winter visitor and occasional breeder.*  
*International Importance: 2500 National Importance: 470*

HWYADEN YR EITHIN

Nationally important numbers have been seen in most years, typically around the time of the summer moult. The maximum count of 1,860 birds was recorded in June 2015, but numbers on the mudflats have been much lower since 2020. Typically, 400-500 birds can be found anytime after the nesting



season, mostly on the mudflats of Oakenholt marsh, though this is typically about 5% of the Dee population.

Shelduck bred almost every year between 1978 and 1992, when large "creches" of chicks from different parents were sometimes reported; several pairs raised 5- 12 young each in 1980. During the following 20 years (1993-2012), nesting was only recorded twice (1996 and 2006). They nested in 4 out of 5 years during 2013-2017, though only 2 chicks were seen in 2013.

No breeding was recorded since 2017, until a pair was seen with 6 chicks on July 27<sup>th</sup> 2025.

Shelduck commonly nest in rabbit burrows so factors that might affect breeding success include loss of Rabbits, whether by *myxomatosis* or by loss of their habitat. In 1993, more than half the power station fields adjacent the Reserve were lost to new construction and Shelduck nesting was confirmed only twice in the following 20 years, but the exact location of nesting sites is not known.

Confirmed breeding years **bold and underlined** below.

25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 **17 16 15 14 13** 12 11 10 09 08 07 **06** 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 **96** 95 94  
 93 **92 91 90 89 88** 87 **86 85 84 83 82** 81 **80 79 78** 77 76

**Mandarin Duck** *Aix galericulata*

HWYADEN MANDARIN

*Very scarce winter visitor to the Reserve. Breeds in North Wales. An Asian species established in Britain since the early 20th Century.*

Singles were present Jan 20-25<sup>th</sup> 1979, Nov 7<sup>th</sup> 1983 (with Mallard) and Feb 18<sup>th</sup> 2007. Two males and a female were present on Oct 5<sup>th</sup> 1987.



Garganey: Peter Haslem

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula* HWYADEN ADDFAIN  
*Very scarce passage migrant.*

The first record was of a male on Sep 11<sup>th</sup> 1976 and there have been only four further records, including another male with 20 Teal on Oct 4<sup>th</sup> 1981. After further singles in 2003 and on Nov 28<sup>th</sup> 2005, an eclipse male was flushed from the fly-ash lagoon by a marsh harrier on Sep 8<sup>th</sup> 2013. Male in eclipse with Teal on Oct 14<sup>th</sup> 2019

**Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*  
Common winter visitor.

HWYADEN LYDANBIG



Although two pairs were present in summer 1978, Shoveler are now winter visitors (Sep-Apr). The graph below accurately reflects its changing fortunes with significant numbers in the 1980s but then low until a sharp increase in recent years. The 30 on the fly-ash lagoon on Jan 20<sup>th</sup> 2013 was exceeded by a count of 38 there on Oct 21<sup>st</sup> 2014, but the highest count was an exceptional 125 on the lagoon in Dec 2022. Currently, counts on the whole Dee estuary are typically 200-300.



Shoveler: Peter Haslem

**Gadwall** *Mareca strepera*

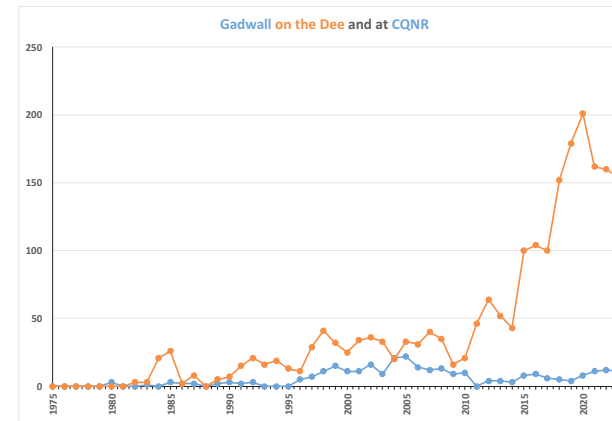
Fairly common in small numbers; present most months but no evidence of breeding.

HWYADEN LWYD

The first record was on Jan 24<sup>th</sup> 1980, when a pair were on the Marsh Scrape, increasing to 3 the following day. Another was on the mudflats on Sep 3<sup>rd</sup> 1980. They became regular on the fly-ash lagoon from 1986 and their numbers started to increase in 1996, peaking in 2004/5 when there were counts of 21 and 22 respectively, the latter high occurring on Mar 12<sup>th</sup>. Gadwall numbers nationally increased by 300% between 1984 and 2009 and there is no evidence of any recent decline on the Reserve. Numbers on the Dee estuary also increased after 1995, but remained less than 50 until they took off again after 2015 and are now 100-200.



Gadwall: Peter Haslem

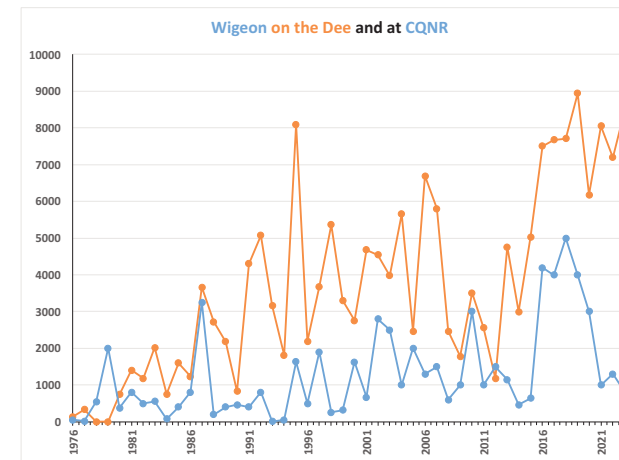


**Wigeon** *Mareca penelope*

CHWIWELL

Abundant winter visitor.

International Importance: 14,000 National Importance: 4500.



Wintering numbers are variable, with large influxes occurring only in severe weather and it is these peak counts that are shown in the graph below. The big freeze of mid-January 1987 was spectacular with 3,250 on the Reserve for over a week, some of them roosting on icebergs floating down the river Dee at high tide. The other two winters when the Reserve held the whole Dee population were also the very cold winters of 1979 and 2010 (see graph). Smaller numbers, perhaps a few hundreds, can be found feeding on the Reserve daily throughout

the winter. National importance was achieved in October 2018 with a record count of 5,000.



Wigeon: Mike Pollard

**American Wigeon** *Mareca americana*  
Rare vagrant from the USA.

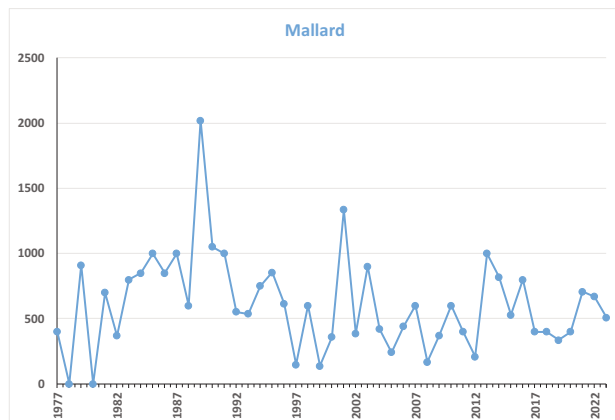
CHWIWELL AMERICA

Males were recorded on Dec 16<sup>th</sup> 2003 and Jan 31<sup>st</sup> 2006. A "storm" variant was at RSPB Oakenholt Marsh on Jan 21<sup>st</sup> 2024 and a "non-variant" there on Feb 12<sup>th</sup> 2024. All accepted by WRBC.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

HWYADEN WYLLT

Common breeding resident and year-round visitor.  
International Importance: 20,000 National Importance: 6,700



As with Shelduck, peak Mallard counts are often during the summer moult when large numbers in eclipse plumage loaf on the sand-banks, although the highest ever count of 2,020 birds was on Sep 8<sup>th</sup> 1989. There had already been a Reserve record of 1,287 summering birds on June 24<sup>th</sup> that year. Since those heady days, there has been some decline in average numbers, as the graph shows. In the present century, maxima have been more often below 500 than above, and the only count to exceed 1,000 was in 2001. 1-3 pairs usually nest successfully and parents with chicks were seen in each of the years underlined below, with 8 young in 2016, 10 in 2017 and 7 in 2023.



Mallard: Mike Pollard

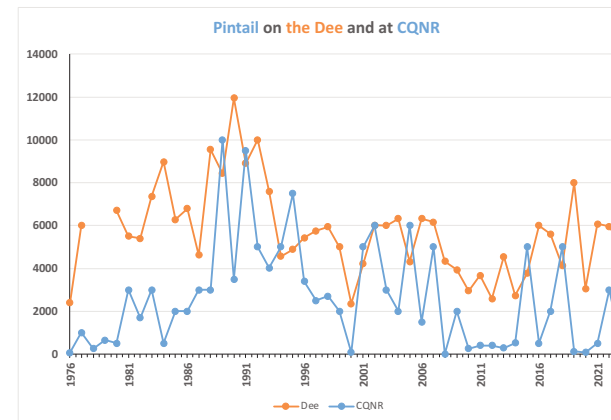
Confirmed breeding years **bold and underlined** below.

**25** **24** **23** 22 21 20 19 18 17 **16** 15 14 13 12 11 **10** 09 08 **07** 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95  
94 93 92 91 90 89 **88** **87** 86 85 **84** **83** 82 81 80 **79** **78** **77** 76 75

**Pintail** *Anas acuta*

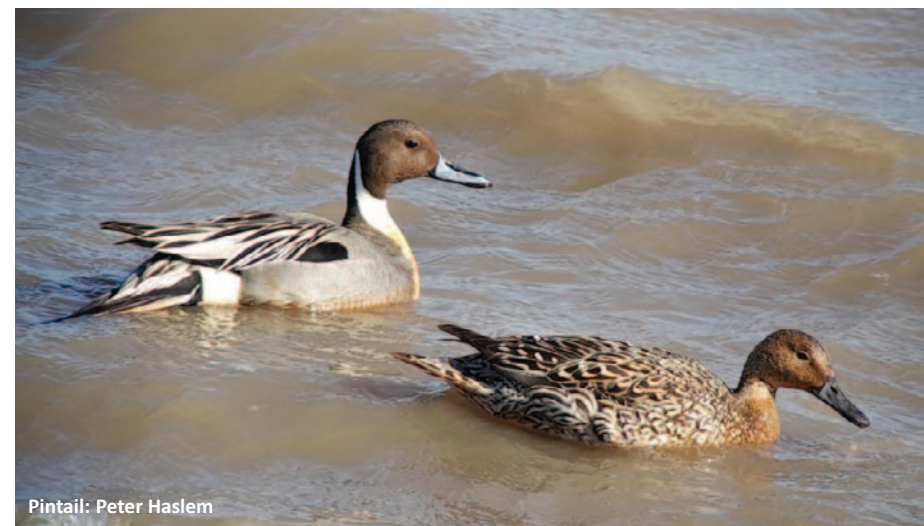
HWYADEN LOSTFAIN

Winter visitor, usually on the river and sometimes in internationally-important numbers.  
International Importance: 600 National Importance: 200



For over 20 years, between 1985 and 2007, Pintail were a key feature of the Reserve, with internationally-important numbers flying in on the rising tide. The best year was 1989, when 5,000 were present throughout September, increasing to 10,000 on Oct 15<sup>th</sup>. The count of 9,500 in 1991 was nearly as high, but counts of 5,000 or more were also made in 1992, 1994, 1995, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2015 and 2018, usually in Oct-Nov. Unlike the other ducks that come in large

numbers, Pintail have not been a reliable sight on the Reserve, making only intermittent appearances in recent years. Their stronghold on the Dee is across the river on Gayton Sands in England where numbers have hardly changed in the past 50 years. The graph above suggests that, in some years, the whole Dee population was recorded on the Reserve (usually on a high tide), while in other years the Reserve recorded only part of the flock or hardly any of it.

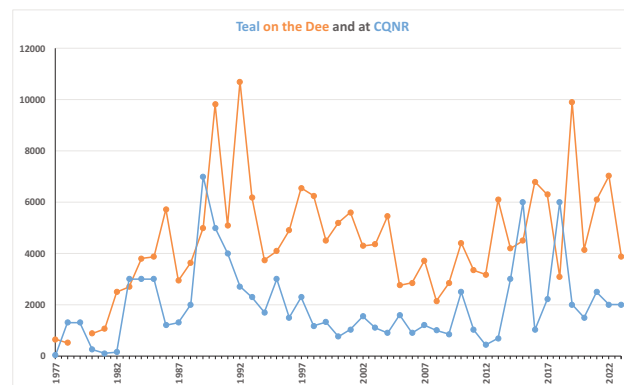


Pintail: Peter Haslem

**Teal** *Anas crecca*  
Abundant winter visitor.

CORHWYADEN

International Importance: 5,000 National Importance: 4,300



Present daily in winter, but numbers only began to achieve national importance (at that time) during the winters of 1983/84 and 1984/85 with peaks of 3,000 birds. Numbers on the nearby Mersey fell from over 20,000 during 1980-83 to less than 10,000 during 1984-87. Internationally important numbers were achieved briefly when 7,000 roosted on Flint Sands for several days in Dec 1989. Counts of 3,000-4,000 were also made in the 1990/91

winter. Peak winter counts have been variable over the past 20 years with an average of around 2000, but there were internationally important counts of 6,000 in both 2015 (Oct 27<sup>th</sup>) and 2018 (October). Currently, the Reserve has more than one-third of the Dee winter population.



Teal: Mike Pollard

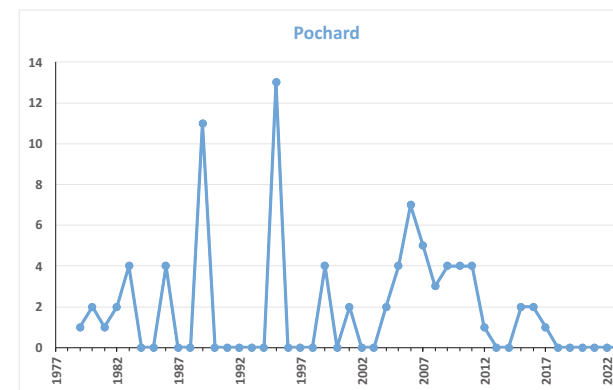
**Green-winged Teal** *Anas carolinensis*  
Rare vagrant from North America.

CORHWYADEN ASGELLWERDD

One was first reported to [deestuery.com](http://deestuery.com) on Mar 10<sup>th</sup> 2007. There was another record on Feb 6<sup>th</sup> 2016 and a male was found on the bunded pools on Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017. WRBP-accepted.

**Pochard** *Aythya ferina*  
Very scarce winter visitor. **RED-LISTED**

HWYADEN BENGGOCH



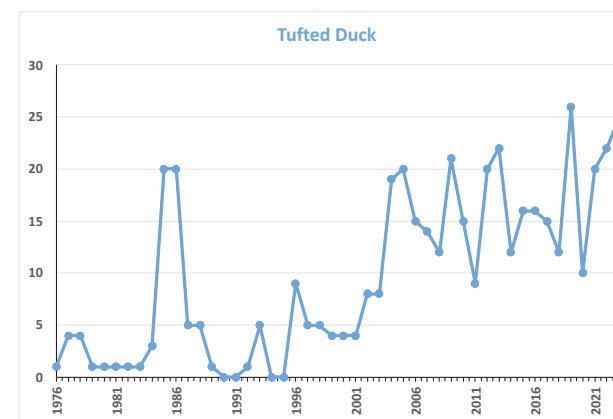
Eleven birds on the bunded pool on Feb 1<sup>st</sup> 1987 were all males, but the maximum count was 13 in 1993. Wintering Pochard numbers on the whole Dee estuary were often over 100 in the last century but started to decline after 2001 and crashed to single figures after 2008. The most recent records were a male on Nov 4<sup>th</sup> 2015 and a female on the river on Jul 16<sup>th</sup> 2022.

Years with birds present (**BOLD**) or not recorded (*italics*):

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*  
Common breeding resident.

HWYADEN GOPOG



Numbers usually increase in spring and the highest adult count of 22 birds was on 22/5/13 .

First nested in 1997, as a result of improvements to the fly-ash lagoon, where it nested most subsequent years as well.

Breeding success **bold and underlined** below.

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

Recent duckling counts were 14y on July 18<sup>th</sup> 2015, 12y on July 19<sup>th</sup> 2016, 13y in 2017, 8y on July 12<sup>th</sup> 2018, 20y in Aug 2019, 8y on July 8<sup>th</sup> 2023 and 6y on Aug 18<sup>th</sup> 2024.

**Scaup** *Aythya marila*  
Very scarce winter visitor.

HWYADEN BENDDU

Rarely seen on the Reserve, the highest count was of 17 birds on the river on Nov 12<sup>th</sup> 1978. In 2016, there were 3 on Feb 21<sup>st</sup> and 1 on Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>. In 2017, 1 on Feb 24<sup>th</sup> and 2 on Nov 7<sup>th</sup>.

Years with birds present (**BOLD**) or not recorded (*italics*):

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 **09 08** 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 **92**  
91 90 89 **88** 87 86 85 84 **83 82** 81 80 79 **78 77** 76

**Eider** *Somateria mollissima*  
Rare winter visitor.

HWYADEN FWYTHBLU



Eider: Peter Haslem

A male and two females flying up-river near the Field Study Centre were seen by visitors from the mid-Cheshire Ornithological Society on Oct 22<sup>nd</sup> 2013. More recently, a female bird was photographed at high tide on Jun 15<sup>th</sup> 2021 and there were 3 males and a female on river Apr 23<sup>rd</sup> 2023.

**Velvet Scoter** *Melanitta fusca*  
Rare winter visitor. **RED-LISTED**

MÔR-HWYADEN Y GOGLEDD

Only two records: the first of six birds (4M, 2F) on the river on Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1983 and the second of two birds in 1991.

**Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra*  
Very scarce winter visitor on high tides.

MÔR-HWYADEN DDU



Common Scoter: Mike Pollard

Of the vast number that can be found in the sea off the North Wales coast, only a few occasionally find their way up the Dee estuary on very high tides. A female on the high tides of both Oct 14<sup>th</sup> and Nov 28<sup>th</sup> 1988 were the first Reserve records. Two together were seen in both 1990 and 1992. In 2014, there were 4 records of a single on high tides between Feb 17<sup>th</sup> and Mar 23<sup>rd</sup>, and another on May 11<sup>th</sup>. In 2016, there were 4 records of singles during Jan-Feb. There were 20 on Oct 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017 and the maximum of 100 was seen during NW gales on Oct 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017. In 2021, there were 3 singles in Jul and Sep and there was a female on Apr 9<sup>th</sup> 2024

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 **92**  
91 **90 89 88** 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis*  
Rare winter visitor. **RED-LISTED**

HWYADEN GYNFFONHIR

A female that stayed on the banded pool from Oct 24<sup>th</sup> to Nov 7<sup>th</sup> 1980 was the first Reserve record. Three records in 1988, a good year generally for this species, included 2 together on Nov 24<sup>th</sup> and there were further singles in 1990/1991. A long gap followed until a male and female were seen flying upriver on Nov 16<sup>th</sup> 2023.

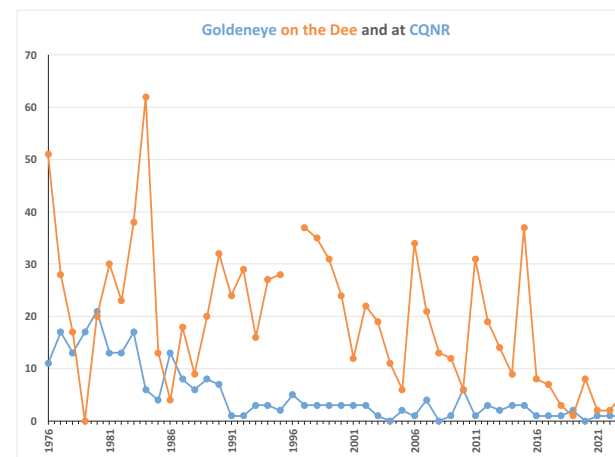
Years when seen in **bold**:

24 **23** 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92  
**91 90 89 88** 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 **80** 79 78 77 76

**Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*  
Scarce winter visitor.

HWYADEN LYGAD-AUR

The maximum count of 21 on the banded pool on Dec 25<sup>th</sup> 1980 included two drakes. Numbers crashed in 1991 and have not recovered, as the graph shows. One or two are still seen almost annually, but not as a continuous presence. All records were from late October to early March, initially on the banded pool, but recently on the fly ash lagoon or river.



**Goosander** *Mergus merganser*  
Uncommon winter visitor.

HWYADEN DDANHEDDOG



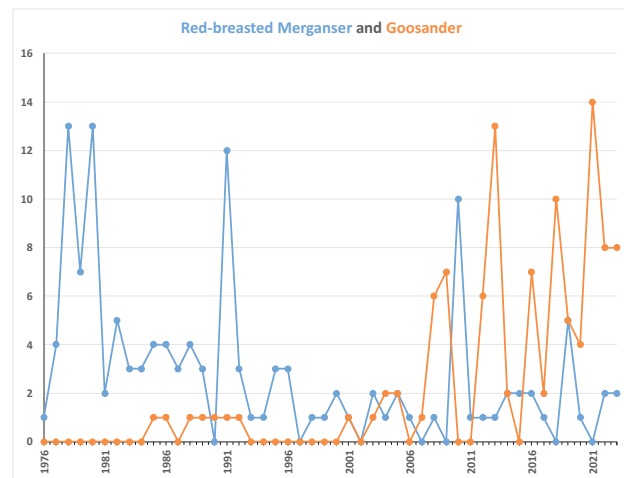
Goosander: Peter Haslem

This species was rarely seen on the Reserve until 2012, when it became an annual visitor. Numbers in Wales also increased during the past 15 years. The highest counts were of 13 birds on the fly-ash lagoon on Sep 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 and 14 in July 2021. The first records were in 1988 when there were 5 singles between Aug and Dec and a female on Oct 28<sup>th</sup> 1989. The graph below shows how, during the

past 20 years, Goosander have replaced Red-breasted as the commoner *Mergus* species on the Reserve.

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*  
Scarce winter visitor. **RED-LISTED**

HWYADEN FRONGOCH



The highest counts of 13 red-heads were in 1978 and 1980 on the bunded pool. Though males were only occasional, a pair was seen displaying together on the bunded pool in March 1979. They are now less common than Goosander, reflecting national trends, and are no longer seen every year, usually on the river from West Hide. It is a more maritime species, compared with Goosander, which prefers freshwater habitats.

**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis*  
**EXTIRPATED.**

HWYADEN GOCH

The first record was a single on Aug 4<sup>th</sup> 1982, followed by 3 on the bunded pool in Nov 1990. The highest count was of 4 birds (1 adult plus 3 chicks) on the fly-ash lagoon in 2003 when they nested for the first and only time. The success of the UK eradication programme, aimed at conservation of the European White-headed Duck, means there were no sightings after 2009.

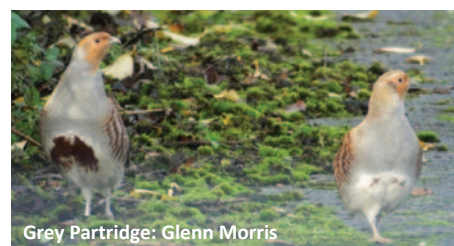
Years when seen in **bold**.

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Grey Partridge** *Perdix perdix*

PETRISEN

Scarce resident. Once bred. **RED-LISTED**



Grey Partridge: Glenn Morris

The decline in this species reflects trends in both the UK and North Wales, though loss of grazing fields during construction of the new Power Station after autumn 1993 almost certainly contributed. Breeding was last confirmed in 1987 though records of coveys of 10+ birds up until 1990 suggest probable breeding. There were occasional records of 1-4

during 1991-93 but then no further records until a pair was seen on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2004. A pair was recorded again near West Hide on Nov 16<sup>th</sup> 2020, again in 2021 and in Jan-May 2022, but there were no records in 2023.

Presence in **bold**, confirmed breeding **bold and underlined** below

24 **23 22 21 20** 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 **08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*

FFESANT

RELEASED FOR SHOOTING.

Surprisingly uncommon in the early days, but they are now attracted by the bird feeders and there was a record count of 9 on Nov 4<sup>th</sup> 2013. The 2012 records of singles and a pair were in spring (Mar 24<sup>th</sup> - Apr 1<sup>st</sup>).

Years when seen in **bold**.

24 **23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Red-legged Partridge** *Alectoris rufa*

PETRISEN GOESGOCH

RELEASED FOR SHOOTING.

One was released on the Reserve in 1983 and never seen again, but there were records of singles on Jan 6<sup>th</sup> and Mar 17<sup>th</sup> 1986. There were no subsequent records for over 20 years until 2007. Recent occurrences have tended to be in late autumn when birds are released locally for sporting purposes.

Years when seen in **bold**.

24 **23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Swift** *Apus apus*

GWENNOL DDU

Passage migrant and summer visitor. **RED-LISTED**

Swifts are most common in mid-May and early August when passage is at its peak. They sometimes occur in large numbers. A high count of 300 on Aug 7<sup>th</sup> 1985 was repeated in 1992 and 1993, but the highest count of 340 was on Aug 6<sup>th</sup> 2017.

**Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

COG

Passage migrant, once common but now very scarce. **RED-LISTED**

Once a common sight on the Reserve, with two juveniles seen on Aug 23<sup>rd</sup> 1980, there was a rapid decline in this species during the 1990s. The decline is evident from the fact that there were 10 records per year in 1983 and 1984 and 15 records in 1989, while the current average is less than 1 record each year and a 2008 record was the first for nearly 20 years. In recent years, one was seen flying across

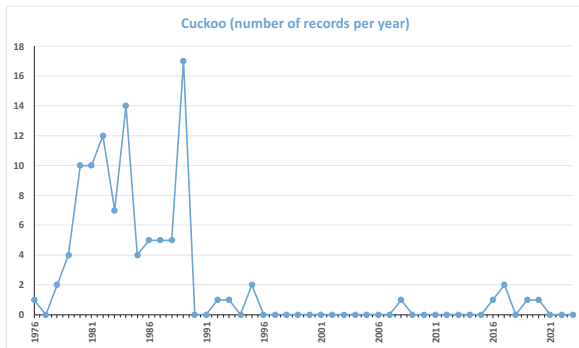


Cuckoo (not at CQNR): Glenn Morris

the Nature Trail on Jun 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017, mobbed by Meadow Pipits, and another over the revetment from West Hide on Jun 10<sup>th</sup> 2017. A juvenile perched on the West car park fence on Jun 28<sup>th</sup> 2019 and another juvenile was seen on Aug 17<sup>th</sup> 2020. Breeding was never confirmed on the Reserve and it may be co-incidental that the decline in sightings began in the early 1990s when the new power station was built.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 **20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09**  
**08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93**  
**92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77**  
**76**



**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia*  
*Non-breeding visitor.*

COLOMEN Y GRAIG

Occasional records of singles or small numbers, often of ringed racing or domestic birds. Probably under-recorded.

**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas*  
*Resident and winter visitor.*

COLOMEN WYLLT

Currently, there are usually a few around the bird feeders all year, without evidence of breeding, but large winter flocks also occur, including 140 in Feb 2019, 102 in Feb 2015 and 110 in Feb 2020.

**Woodpigeon** *Columba palumbus*  
*Breeding resident and winter visitor.*

YSGUTHAN

Breeding on the Reserve was confirmed as early as 1976 and more recently on July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016 and Jun 16<sup>th</sup> 2017. The highest winter count was of 274 on Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018, increasing to 300 in Jan 2019.

**Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*

TURTUR

*Once a summer visitor, but now very rare in Wales. RED-LISTED*

Consistent with the national decline in this species, there are only 3 historical records: May 12<sup>th</sup> 1979, June 16<sup>th</sup> 1979 (2 birds) and July 31<sup>st</sup> 1980.

**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*  
*Visitor, breeding outside the Reserve.*

TURTUR DORCHOG

This species was often recorded in small numbers from the old entrance road which ran behind Kelsterton Road gardens towards Rockcliffe. The highest count of 20 was at Rockcliffe during the 1985/86 winter. The path along the railway line behind the fly ash lagoon is now the most likely place to find them.

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*

RHEGEN Y DWR

*Scarce winter visitor.*

The earliest records were from the bunded pool on Dec 22<sup>nd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> 1980 and Jan 7<sup>th</sup> 1984. Two birds were seen on the Oakenholt marsh scrape in front of West Hide on Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> 1986. A bird seen among the developing reeds on the fly ash lagoon by several people on Nov 9<sup>th</sup> 2014, was the first record for 28 years. All recent records have been from the fly ash lagoon, with 5 sightings of singles in 2017 on Jan 30<sup>th</sup>, Mar 3<sup>rd</sup>, Mar 5<sup>th</sup>, Nov 18<sup>th</sup> and Nov 22<sup>nd</sup>. In 2022, there were singles there on Jul 16<sup>th</sup> and Jul 26<sup>th</sup> and in 2023, one was seen several from Oct 1<sup>st</sup> to Dec 26<sup>th</sup>.

Years when seen in **bold**.

24 **23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92**  
**91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*  
*Breeding resident.*

IAR DWR

Moorhens were only seen occasionally during 1977-82, mostly in the Rockcliffe area, a long way from the marsh, at times of flooding. They first appeared in the fly-ash lagoon area in Aug 1983. A pair first raised 5 young on the fly-ash lagoon in 1988 and two pairs nested in 1989, after rushes started to fringe the lagoon in 1987. They may have nested in most years since 1988, but years in which chicks were seen are underlined below. The highest count of 30 was made during the WeBS count on July 19<sup>th</sup> 2015. Nesting was confirmed on the small pool by the Field Study Centre for first time on July 6<sup>th</sup>

2017, when reeds had started to grow there.

Confirmed breeding years **bold and underlined** below.

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Coot** *Fulica atra*

CWTIAR

*Breeding resident and winter visitor.*

Although there was a first record of 3 on the river on Jan 3<sup>rd</sup> 1979, this species was quite a late-comer to the Reserve. The first record from the fly-ash lagoon was a single on Aug 26<sup>th</sup> 1983 with subsequent sporadic sightings during 1986-89. It first nested in 1991 but numbers remained low until after the mitigation work on the lagoon in 1997. Four pairs bred in 1999. Grassy banks for feeding and reduced disturbance may have contributed to higher numbers. By 2009, there were 20-40 most months of the year. The highest count of 86 was on the Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 2014 WeBS count, with 36 on the lagoon and another 50 on the marsh. Currently, it is common for 2 or more broods to appear on the lagoon in Apr/May and May/June.

Years in which successful breeding was confirmed are **bold and underlined** below.

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

GWYACH FACH

*Breeding resident and winter visitor.*

The first record was in winter 1976 and the highest winter count on the bunded pools was 16 both on Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016 and in October 2019. Breeding was first attempted in 1989 and was successful on the fly-ash lagoon after mitigation works most years during 1996-2006 and during 2012-2023. Two nests failed in 2018 when water levels were very low. There are usually 2 nesting pairs on the lagoon and most wintering birds are on the bunded pools.

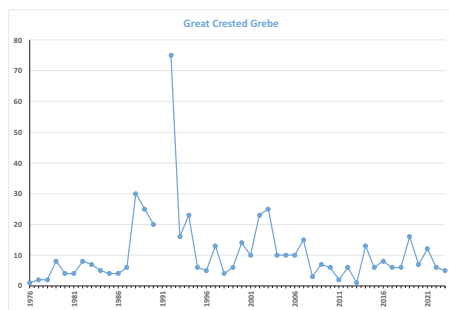
Confirmed breeding years **bold and underlined** below.

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*

GWYACH FAWR GOPOG

*Recently breeding on fly-ash lagoon and fairly common winter visitor on the river during high tides.*



Recorded on the river in winter from 1976 onwards, usually in single figures, but there were two periods when peak numbers were consistently in double figures: 1988-1994 and 2000-2007. The highest count by far was 75 on Nov 24<sup>th</sup> 1992 (Clwyd Bird Report, 1991-92). In 2017, there were 50 records of 1-4 birds on the river in most months of the year. A pair nested for the first time on the fly ash lagoon with two chicks in 2024 and three chicks in 2025.

**Slavonian Grebe** *Podiceps auritus*

GWYACH GORNIOG

*Very scarce winter visitor, usually on the river. RED-LISTED*

Usually singles, but two present on Oct 28<sup>th</sup> 1980 and on Dec 29<sup>th</sup> 1989. One was seen 4 times on the river at high tide between Oct 8<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> 1988. The most recent records were on Oct 25<sup>th</sup> 2022 and Jan 24<sup>th</sup> 2024.

Years when seen in **bold**.

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

PIODEN FÔR

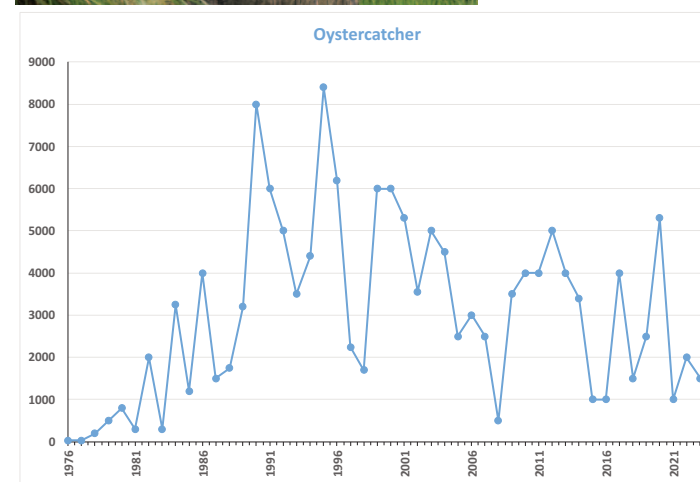
*Regular breeding resident. Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant.*

*International Importance: 8200 National Importance: 2900.*



Roosting numbers are highest on passage in both spring (Apr/May) but now mainly in autumn (Sep/Nov), when they fly in to Flint Point as the estuary mud is covered by the rising tides. Only small numbers remain to feed at low tide. The highest number recorded was 8,400 on a WeBS count in 1995. The graph below shows some decline since then, with numbers peaking at 1,000-2,000 birds since 2021. The internationally-important numbers on the whole Dee estuary have changed very little over the years.

Breeding attempts have been recorded almost annually since the Reserve started in 1976 with 4 nests in 1999, but evidence of success has been less common than evidence of failure. They first



nested successfully in 1977 and 1978, but during 1979-89 only one attempt in 1987 was successful. Two chicks were seen on the bunded pool in 1994 and one on the fly-ash lagoon in 1995. In 2013, 2014 and 2015, two pairs raised 4 chicks between them and a pair was seen with 3 young on the bunded pool on both Jun 14<sup>th</sup> 2023 and Jun 28<sup>th</sup> 2024. A pair also nested inside the

Power Station in 2024.

Breeding attempts are shown underlined below; years with successful breeding are **bold and underlined**.

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 **15** **14** **13** 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 **95** **94** 93 92 91 90 89 88 **87** 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 **78** **77** **76**

**Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*

CAMBIG

Breeding visitor, passage migrant and winter visitor.

International Importance: 940 National Importance: 87.

The first record for the Reserve was a single on the bunded pool or river from Apr 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> 1984 and another spent 3 weeks on the pool in 1990. Singles were seen again in 1991 and 1992. They were seen



Avocet: Peter Haslem

almost annually from 2002, with a count of 5 on Feb 17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> 2008 and counts of 4 during Apr 11 - 17<sup>th</sup> 2010 and on Aug 13<sup>th</sup> 2012. A high count of 12 on Aug 8<sup>th</sup> 2017 included 11 from the West Hide and one remained to spend Christmas here. One July 2017 bird had been ringed as a fledgling on Jun 7<sup>th</sup> at Seal Sands, Cleveland. A pair successfully raised three chicks for the first time on the fly ash lagoon in May 2021, just 2 years after Black-headed Gulls began nesting on the same island. They first bred successfully at RSPB Burton Mere in 2006, but have nested in Suffolk since 1947. A pair produced 3 chicks in May 2022, but only one survived. In 2023, 4 pairs produced 3, 1, 1 and 2 young from July 4<sup>th</sup> onwards. 3 well-grown young were still present on Aug 5<sup>th</sup> 2023 and the maximum count of 35 was in July 2023. In 2024, 4 pairs raised 6 chicks and the highest count was 49 on July 12<sup>th</sup>. One on Aug 14<sup>th</sup> 2023 had been ringed as a chick at Condor Green, Lancashire the same year.

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*

CORNCHWIGLEN

Abundant winter visitor. Once bred.

International Importance: 20,000 National Importance: 6200.



Lapwing: Mike Pollard

Lapwing were described as “breeding residents” in 1976, display over Oakenholt Marsh was regularly observed in the 1980s and 4 “pairs in suitable habitat” were on Oakenholt Marsh in 1991, but a pair seen with 2 young on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2002, remains the only evidence of successful breeding on the Reserve. Nesting was attempted at the lagoon in 2004 and mating was observed on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, but no attempts have been reported since then.

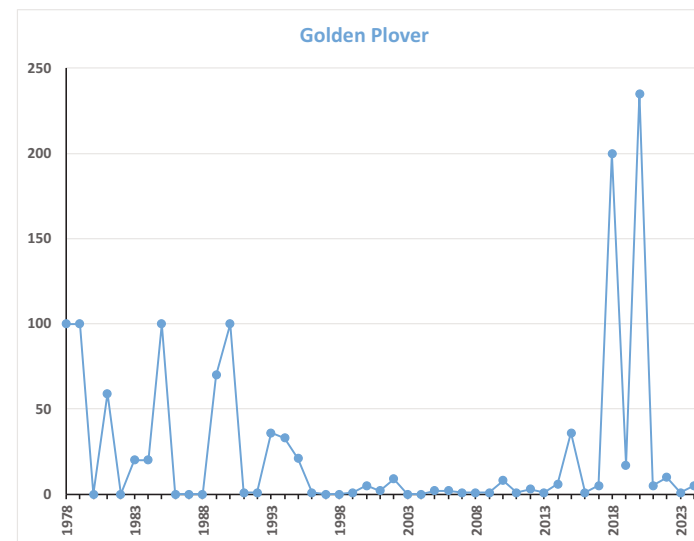
Peak numbers generally occur in mid-winter and the highest counts were 5,400 on a WeBS day in 1995 and a one-off estimate of 9,000 on Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 2007. There is no evidence of any long-term changes in wintering lapwing numbers, which are significant. Typically, 6,000-12,000 lapwing winter on the whole Dee estuary, with little change since the 1980s.

**Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*

CWTIAD AUR

Scarce winter visitor. **RED-LISTED**

International Importance: 9300 National Importance: 4000.



Golden Plovers are only brief and sporadic winter visitors. Four counts of 100 included a flock on the snow-covered bunded pool on Jan 8<sup>th</sup> 1985 and others in 1978, 1979 and 1990. After 1996, counts were very low until 2018 when there were unusual flocks of 100 in Feb and 200 in April. The Dee as a whole has only a few hundred with little change over the years.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*  
Rare vagrant.

CORGWTIAD AUR Y MÔR TAWEL

The first record for the reserve was of a bird on the Marsh Scrape on July 23<sup>rd</sup> 1989, which remained for a few days in the middle of Oakenholt Marsh where it was seen by many. Another adult was present from Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> 1990 (e-Bird). Both were BBRC-accepted.

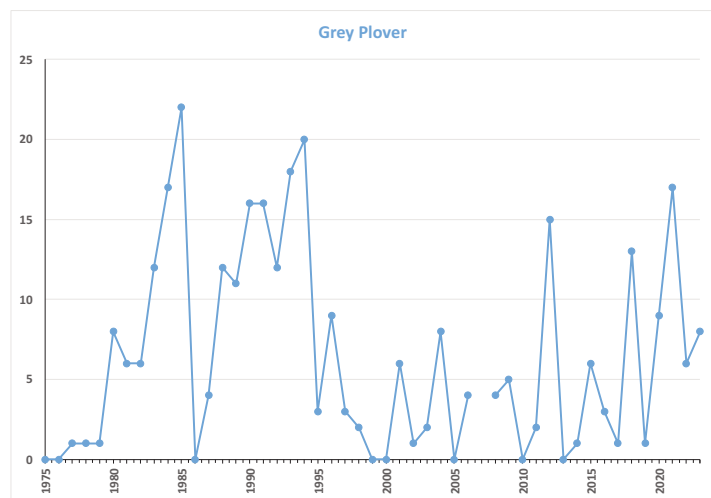
**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*  
Uncommon winter visitor.  
International Importance: 2,000 National Importance: 330.

CWTIAD LLWYD



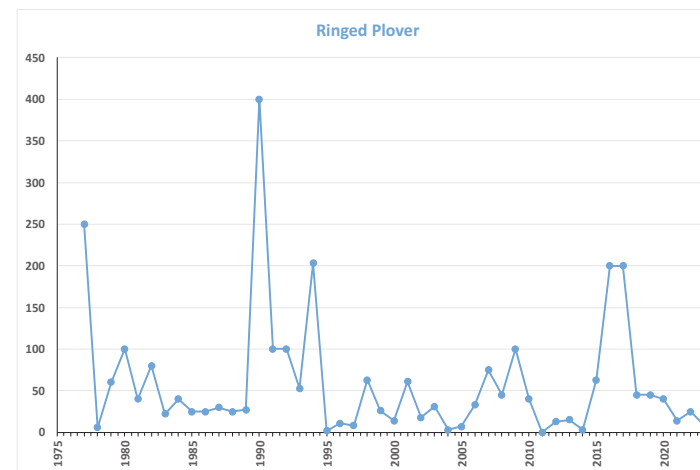
Grey Plover: Peter Haslem

This is another winter visitor in small numbers. The extraordinary count of 275 birds on Oct 31<sup>st</sup> 2007 was by far the largest number ever recorded on the Reserve, but only one-third of the number wintering on the Dee (typically, about 1,000). The graph below (2007 count omitted) suggests that flocks were larger during 1983-1994 than during recent years.



**Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*  
Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor. **RED-LISTED**

CWTIAD TORCHOG



This species occurs on both spring (Mar-May) and autumn (Aug-Oct) passages, and more rarely in winter. There were 250 on Aug 5<sup>th</sup> 1977, but the highest count of 400 was made in 1990. A rare winter record was of 10 on Dec 28<sup>th</sup> 2007. Numbers are very variable, as the graph below shows, and their visits are often very brief, so it is difficult to discern any significant trend in the

numbers. In 2017, there was an unusually good autumn passage with 22 records of up to 200 birds on Oakenholt Marsh between Aug 5<sup>th</sup> and Oct 20<sup>th</sup>, though 2016 also had 200 on Aug 30<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup>.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*  
Uncommon, but regular, passage migrant, summer visitor and occasional breeder.

CWTIAD TORCHOG BACH



Little Ringed Plover: Glenn Morris

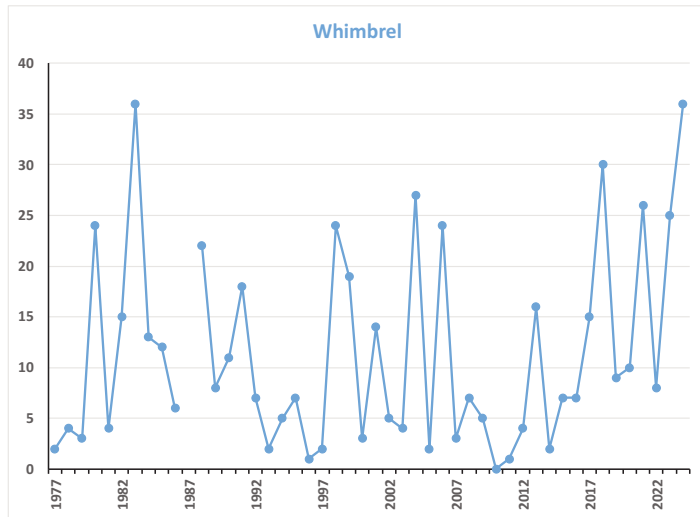
There were summer records in 1976/77 and singles on May 6<sup>th</sup> and July 28<sup>th</sup> 1979. Singles on passage during 1981-83, but 2 adults were on the bunded pool during May 6<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> 1986 and 2 adults were seen on the fly-ash lagoon on July 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 1989, followed by an immature on July 17<sup>th</sup> 1989. In 2007, a pair nested inside the Power Station and raised 3 young. There was proof of breeding again in 2012, when a chick was ringed, but it may have nested in previous years. Breeding was confirmed for a third time on the Reserve when a pair with 3 chicks was seen on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017, the pair having been seen regularly on the fly ash lagoon by many observers between April 3<sup>rd</sup>

and July 29<sup>th</sup>. Pairs were also seen during June/July 2019, 2021 and 2022, but breeding was not confirmed.

Years when seen in **bold**. Confirmed breeding years **bold and underlined** below.  
24 23 **22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08** 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 **89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81** 80 79 78 77 76

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*  
 Uncommon, but regular, passage migrant.  
 International Importance: 6700.

COEGLFINIR



Whimbrel occur annually on spring passage and occasionally in autumn. The highest spring count was of 36 birds on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1983 and the highest autumn count of 22 was on Aug 6<sup>th</sup> 1988. There is no evidence of any significant decline in numbers over the years. They often form tight flocks on passage, calling loudly in flight over the marsh and estuary.



Curlew: Mike Pollard

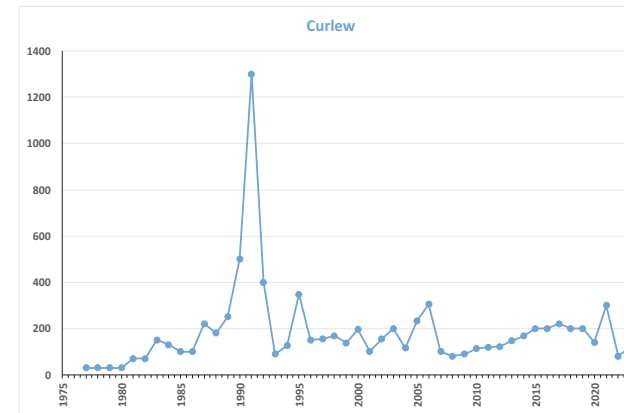


Whimbrel: Mike Pollard

**Curlew** *Numenius arquata*  
 Common winter visitor, present all-year. **RED-LISTED**  
 International Importance: 7600 National Importance: 1200.

GYLFINIR

Curlew can be seen all year, though numbers are small in June. There were some very high counts in the early 1990s and the highest count of 1,300 was made in 1991. Counts of 100-150 birds in winter are now more typical, but there was a low-tide count of 800 on the mudflats between West Hide and the bunded pool on Sep 4<sup>th</sup> 2007 (but only 8 there the previous day). A study showed that all four grazing fields on the Reserve are used by curlew for feeding over long periods, with displacement to other fields or to the estuary mudflats when disturbed. The E-on field attracted most curlews in the early winter, while the mitigation fields (adjacent to the fly ash lagoon) became more important in



late winter and, especially, early spring. On Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> 1985, a fight to the death was observed between two curlews.

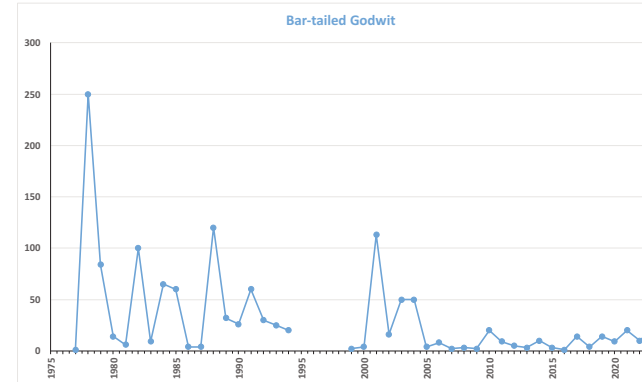
Breeding curlews are red-listed in Wales and the UK, but wintering numbers on the Reserve (about 5% of those on the whole Dee estuary) have changed little.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*  
 Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor. **RED-LISTED**  
 International Importance: 1500.

RHOSTOG GYNFFONFRAITH



Bar-tailed Godwit: Mike Pollard



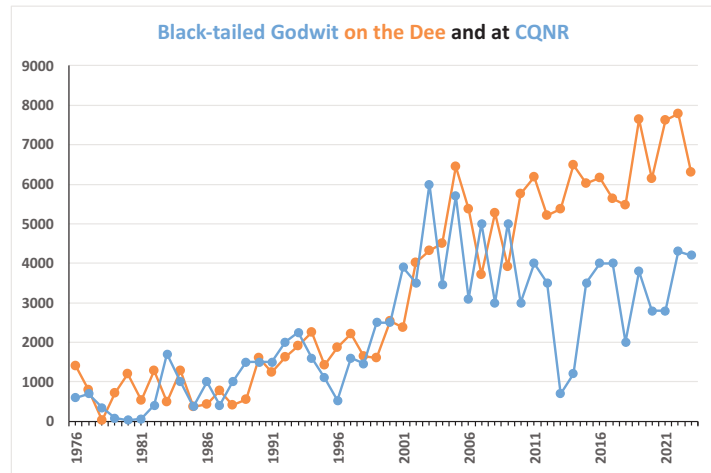
This species is more common at the mouth of the Dee estuary and visits to the Reserve are quite sporadic. Spring passage is mainly April/May, but the highest count of 250 was on June 16<sup>th</sup> 1978. Winter birds tend to flock with the Black-tailed Godwits. The graph shows a decline in numbers, the average maximum being 50 in the first 20 years, but less than 10 in the last 20 years.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*

*Abundant passage migrant and winter visitor from Iceland. International Importance: 1100.*

RHOSTOG GYNFFONDDU

Black-tailed Godwit are present all-year and often in internationally-important numbers, especially on passage in Aug/Sep. Almost the whole Welsh population was once found on the Reserve. In the early days, it was a passage migrant in small numbers, but over-wintering was recorded by 1983. As the



graph clearly shows, numbers increased after 1983, but really took off after 1999, with the highest count of 6,000 in 2003. Up to 2009, almost the whole Dee population was found on the Reserve, but since 2010 about half of them roost along the Heswall-West Kirby shoreline. The Reserve's average maximum count of 1,400 during 1983-2000 has increased to

3,600 in the present century. It is one of few species on the Reserve that has consistently achieved levels of international importance. At the present time, flocks can often be found feeding on the riverside mudflats until they are displaced onto Oakenholt Marsh by the rising tide. Small numbers feed on the bunded pool and a large flock can often be seen at close-range on the fly-ash lagoon in summer.

There have been a number of interesting ringing recoveries on the Reserve (Richard Beckett). One seen on the Reserve on April 11<sup>th</sup> 2013, had been ringed on the Wash in 2010 and had spent Sep 2012 on the west coast of France. A bird on Sep 29<sup>th</sup> 2015 had been ringed at Strangford Loch in 2010; it was seen again on Sep 15<sup>th</sup> 2016. Other notable sightings of ringed Black-tailed Godwit were:

- 1) Bird with broken leg, ringed western France in Nov 2007 and first recorded on the Dee in Jul 2010, was seen on the Reserve on Aug 8<sup>th</sup>, Aug 18<sup>th</sup> and Sep 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016.
- 2) Bird ringed in Iceland in Jun 2010, which usually travelled down the east coast on its way to Portugal, seen at CQNR for the first time on Sep 4<sup>th</sup> 2016.
- 3) Bird ringed as a chick in Iceland in Jun 2015, which passed through RSPB Conwy that autumn and RSPB Leighton Moss in the spring of 2016, was seen at CQNR for the first time on Sep 4<sup>th</sup> 2016, and then again on Sep 4<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 2017.
- 4) Two more Iceland-ringed birds were seen on Apr 23<sup>rd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> 2017.

**Hudsonian Godwit** *Limosa haemastica*

*Very rare vagrant, breeding in northern Canada and Alaska.*

RHOSTOG HUDSON

A first record for Wales. It was found on the bunded pools with Black-tailed Godwits by Geoff Robinson on the evening of Aug 12<sup>th</sup> 2024 before it flew across the river to RSPB Burton Mere where the ID was

confirmed by Colin Wells on the 13<sup>th</sup>. It returned to the Reserve on the 14<sup>th</sup> where it consorted with our Black-tailed flock most days (apart from Aug 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> when it went to RSPB Burton Mere) until Sep 9<sup>th</sup>. Many photographs were taken, both from close to West Hide and from the Flint side of Oakenholt Marsh where non-members gathered. It was later seen on the Mersey at Hale, near Liverpool Airport, on Sep 27<sup>th</sup>. It was a male in breeding plumage which gradually moulted towards winter plumage before leaving.

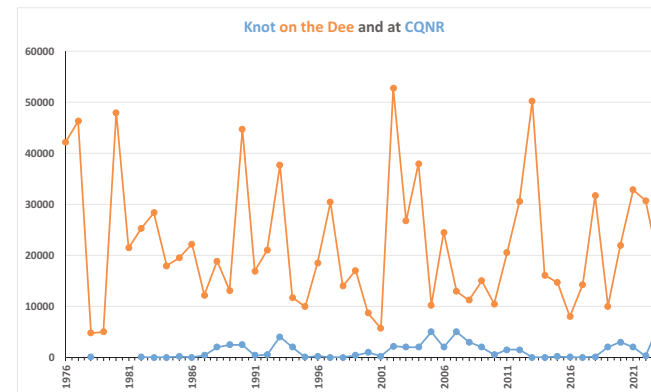


Hudsonian Godwit with Knot, Redshank and Black-tailed Godwits: Mike Pollard

**Knot** *Calidris canutus*

*Abundant passage migrant and winter visitor, but recently present all-year. International Importance: 5300 National Importance: 2600.*

PIBYDD YR ABER YR YNYS LAS



Numbers were small until a flock of 400 occurred regularly in the 1987/88 winter, increasing to 1,000-2,000 in the 1988/89 winter. The highest count was 5,000 on Sep. 19<sup>th</sup> 2005, equalled in 2007 and recently exceeded with a count of 6,200 in Oct 2023. Numbers do fluctuate quite wildly and may reflect changes in their distribution within the Dee estuary which has much

larger, internationally-important numbers that also fluctuate considerably from year-to-year. Numbers using the Reserve crashed in 2013 and 2014, with maximum counts of only 6 and 12 birds respectively. They form tight flocks in flight, like Dunlin and Lapwing, but are usually seen feeding or loafing with the Black-tailed Godwit flock. Unusually, a large group of between 95 and 600 Knot spent the summer of 2023 from May to October resting on the Ash pool with Black-tailed Godwit.

**Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

CWTIAD TRAETH

*Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.*



Turnstone: Mike Pollard

This is a bird of rocky shores and, indeed, some records are from stony areas of the revetment across the river. Although they usually occur on passage, the maximum count of 10 was on Jan 5<sup>th</sup> 1983. The same number occurred in 2007. The next highest count was 8 on July 20<sup>th</sup> 2018, a tiny proportion of the total number on the Dee estuary (over 200).

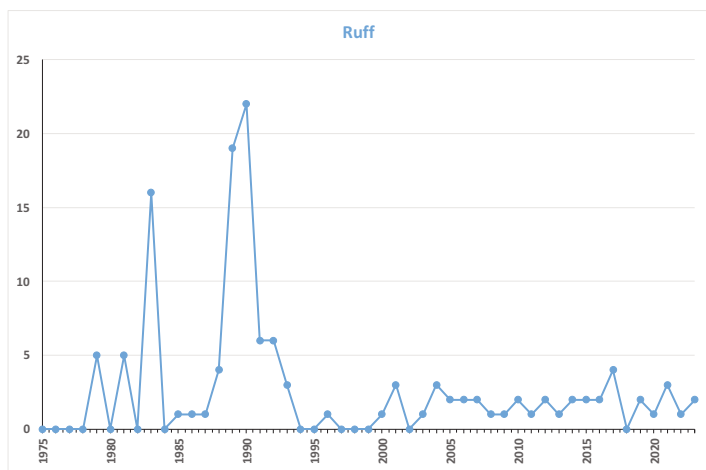
Years when seen in **bold**.

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Ruff** *Calidris pugnax*

PIBYDD TORCHOG

*Uncommon passage migrant and rare winter visitor.*



The highest counts were of 19 on the bunded pool on Aug 25<sup>th</sup> 1989 and 22 on Aug 18<sup>th</sup> 1990. The graph shows a clear decline in this species 20 years ago. However, Ruff are still seen almost annually in autumn, though in very small numbers. Recent records have been of 1-3 birds only and the species is much more reliably seen at RSPB Burton Mere. There were rare

winter records of 3 on Jan 7<sup>th</sup> and 2 on Jan 24<sup>th</sup> 2004, 2 on Dec 22<sup>nd</sup> 2014, 2 on Feb 21<sup>st</sup> 2015 and 1 in Dec 2020.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba*

PIBYDD Y TYWOD

*Uncommon, but regular, passage migrant.*

This bird is common on the sandy beaches of North Wales, but seen only occasionally on the Reserve, which has only 1-2% of total numbers on the Dee estuary. There have been two high counts of 20 in autumn 1977 and on Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> 1981. The next highest was a spring count of 15 on May 6<sup>th</sup> 1984. Two in summer plumage were seen on Aug 27<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> 1989 and there were 16 in breeding plumage on May 26<sup>th</sup> 2019.

Years when seen in **bold**.

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**



Curlew Sandpiper with one Dunlin: Peter Haslem

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*

PIBYDD CAMBIG

*Uncommon, but regular, passage migrant.*

There are good years and poor years for this species on the Dee estuary as a whole and the Reserve gets its share. Thus, 1-2 birds were recorded 6 times in 1983, but there were none in 1984-86. The maximum count was 19 on Sep 12<sup>th</sup> 1988, a year when birds were present on the Reserve between Aug 27<sup>th</sup> and Oct 9<sup>th</sup> and when up to 50 were recorded at Point of Ayr. In 1990, 20 were seen on Jul 23<sup>rd</sup> and they were regular from Aug 20<sup>th</sup> to Nov 7<sup>th</sup>, peaking at 19 on Sep 10<sup>th</sup>. More recently, up to 6 birds gave splendid views from the bunded pool hides from Sep 9<sup>th</sup> to Oct 6<sup>th</sup> 2013. The only spring passage records were in May 1978, with 1 on the bunded pool and 2 in breeding plumage on the Oakenholt marsh scrape.

Years when seen in **bold**:

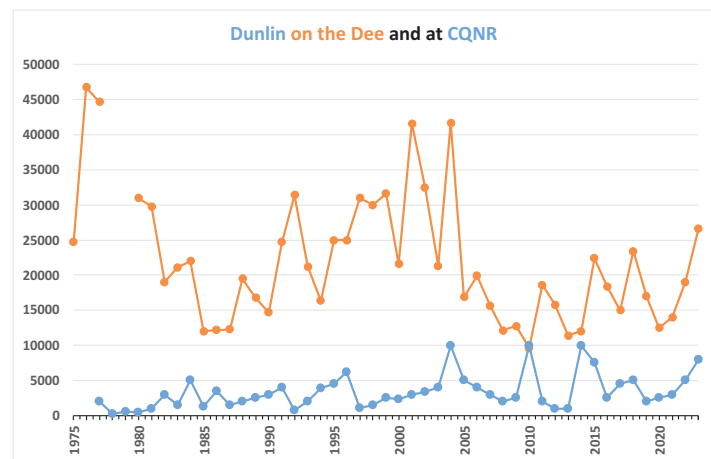
**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*

Abundant passage migrant and winter visitor. **RED-LISTED**

International Importance: 13,300 National Importance: 3,400.

PIBYDD MAWN



This is a rather erratic visitor to the Reserve, sometimes nearly half the Dee population, sometimes relatively few, as the graph illustrates.

The Reserve record of 10,000 in Dec 2004 was repeated in 2010 and 2014. There is no evidence of any long-term change in peak numbers, with an average maximum of 4,500 over the past 20 years compared with 3,000 in the previous

20 years. Adults are rather plain in winter, but they are often seen on passage in their striking juvenile and summer plumages.

**Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima*

Very scarce passage migrant. **RED-LISTED**

PIBYDD DU

This is a bird usually associated in winter with seaside piers or man-made rocky structures. The first record for the Reserve was a bird seen four times between Oct 15<sup>th</sup> and Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> 1989, three times roosting in the West Hide gully at high tide with Spotted Redshank and (not surprisingly) a Turnstone, and once feeding on the mud at low tide. Singles were recorded again Nov 2<sup>nd</sup> 2001 and on Sep 16<sup>th</sup> 2007.

**Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii*

Rare vagrant from North America.

PIBYDD BAIRD

One on Aug 7<sup>th</sup> 1979 (RW Evans and M Williams). Accepted by BBRC.

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*

Uncommon passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor.

International Importance: 3,000.

PIBYDD BACH

This species appears to have been more common since there were 4 records in 1977 and 10 records



Little Stint (not at CQNR): Glenn Morris

of up to 5 birds in 1979. However, the maximum count of 6 on Nov 24<sup>th</sup> 1983 was repeated in 2001 (Sep 28<sup>th</sup>), 2003 (Feb 22<sup>nd</sup>) and in 2005. Most recent counts from the West Hide have been of singles, apart from 2 on Aug 29<sup>th</sup> 2016 and 5 on Sep 6<sup>th</sup> 2021.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 **23** **22** **21** 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09  
08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93  
92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77  
76

**Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii*

Rare passage migrant.

PIBYDD TEMMINCK

This yellow-legged version of the Little Stint has only been seen three times on the Reserve, all singles on Sep 4<sup>th</sup> 1978, Aug 20<sup>th</sup> 1981 and July 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> 1982, when its characteristic quivering flight was observed over the bunded pools.

**White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis*

Rare vagrant from North America.

PIBYDD TINWYN

The only record for the Reserve for this American wader was of a single that spent Jan 12<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> 1985 in front of the West Hide and was first spotted by John Raines.

**Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

Rare vagrant from North America.

GIÁCH GYLFINHIR

The first record was on Dec 9<sup>th</sup> 1979, when one was seen with Lapwing at the tide edge. After a gap of 26 years, one was found on the east grazing field on Oct 13<sup>th</sup> 2005; it moved to RSPB Burton Mere the following day, where the record was accepted by BBRC. Two birds were seen regularly alongside Redshank on the bunded pools in both 2009 (Oct 19<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>) and 2010 (Aug 28<sup>th</sup>-Oct 11<sup>th</sup>). In both cases, the 2 birds had also been seen elsewhere on the estuary and they were accepted by BBRC.

In 2021, there was a brief record at Middle Hide on Sep 23<sup>rd</sup> and in 2023 there were 2 records of a single bird with Black-tailed Godwits on Feb 26<sup>th</sup> and Apr 26<sup>th</sup>.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 **23** **22** **21** 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92  
91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*  
Rare winter visitor. **RED-LISTED**

CYFFYLOG

Recorded only four times; the first was flushed from scrub on the Nature Trail on Dec 19<sup>th</sup> 1982, while the second was watched from the West Hide for 90 min. by many observers on Nov 15<sup>th</sup> 1989, after it had flown in from mid-estuary. The most recent record was at Rockcliffe "gardener's compound" on Dec 24<sup>th</sup> 2014. One was found dead on the road on Nov 29<sup>th</sup> 2020.

**Jack Snipe** *Lymocryptes minimus*  
Very scarce winter visitor.

GIACH FACH

All early records were singles, except for 2 on Apr 6<sup>th</sup> 1990 and 3 on Feb 21<sup>st</sup> 2015. One was put up by sheep on Jan 22<sup>nd</sup> 2005. More recently, there were 3 hiding in newly-cut reeds on Nov 21<sup>st</sup> 2018 and 5 flushed from the bunded pool on the rising tide of Jan 4<sup>th</sup> 2018. Large numbers of Snipe were present also in 2018.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 **21** 20 **19** **18** **17** **16** **15** 14 13 12 **11** **10** 09 08 07 06 **05** 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 **83** 82 81 80 **79** 78 77 76

**Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*  
Fairly common winter visitor.

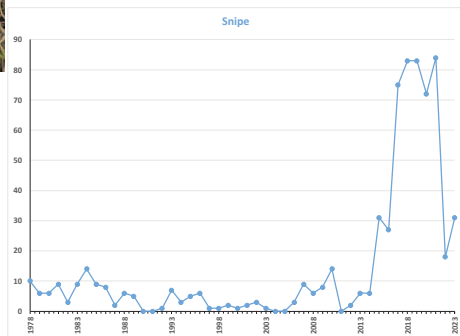
GIACH CYFFREDIN

International Importance: 20,000 National Importance: 10,000.



Snipe: Peter Haslem

The highest count was 14 in 1984 and again in 2010, until massive counts in the grass on the bunded pools of 31 on Jan 26<sup>th</sup> 2015, 83 on both Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018 and Nov 27<sup>th</sup> 2019 and a record 84 in Jan 2021. During 1978 to 1980, there were also summer records. When they are not feeding, Snipe can be quite inconspicuous, often in vegetation at the edge of one of the bunded pools or the fly-ash lagoon. Numbers recorded on the Reserve have increased significantly during the last 10 winters, without any recorded increase on the Dee as a whole.



**Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor*  
Rare vagrant from North America.

LLYDANDROED WILSON

The only phalarope recorded on the Reserve so far was this unexpected American vagrant which arrived on the bunded pool on Aug 31<sup>st</sup> 1982. It was then seen daily by many observers until Sep 6<sup>th</sup>. Accepted by BBRC.

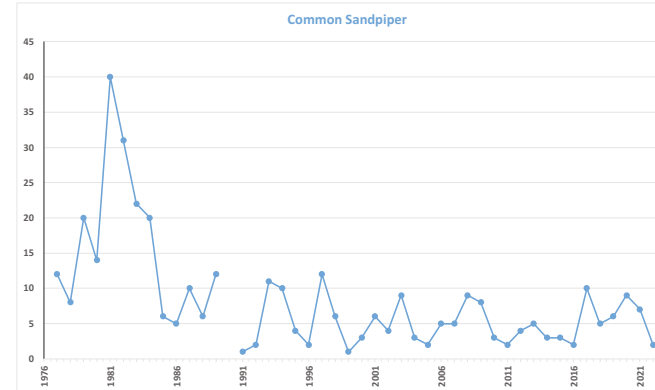
**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*  
Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor.

PIBYDD DORLAN



Common Sandpiper: Mike Pollard

Preferring fresh water, this species is more common on the Reserve than elsewhere in the Dee estuary. The highest counts were 40 on July 8<sup>th</sup> 1981 and 31 on July 18<sup>th</sup> 1982. These flocks were recorded feeding on the fly-ash lagoon but roosting on the bunded pools in the evening. Still 20+ on late July passage in 1983/84, but there was a subsequent decline as the graph shows. The vegetation that



developed around the lagoon at this time (enabling Coot and Moorhen nesting) may have affected numbers. The recent counts of 9 in Aug 2008 and 8 in Aug 2009 were up-river near the Dee Bridge. The occasional winter (Dec-Feb) singles in 1985, 1986, 2003, 2007, 2008 have now become the norm rather than an exception.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*  
Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.

PIBYDD GWYRDD



Green Sandpiper: Peter Haslem

This freshwater species was an annual visitor from 1977 to 1989 with frequent records of 1-3 birds and three high counts of 4 birds on July 30<sup>th</sup> 1980, during Aug 19<sup>th</sup> -31<sup>st</sup> 1982 and on Sep 11<sup>th</sup> 1988. The highest count, however, was of 5 birds in 1994. In 1982, 1-2 birds wintered on the bunded pool and were recorded 19 times. There were also winter singles in 1985 (Dec 8<sup>th</sup>) and 1986 (Mar 5<sup>th</sup>). This century records have usually been of 1-2 birds on West Hide stream or pools.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 **07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00** 99 98 97 96 95 **94** 93 92 91 90 **89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*  
Rare passage migrant.

PIBYDD GRAEAN



Wood Sandpiper (not at CQNR): Glenn Morris

Records of this species were quite regular until the mid-1980s, but became fewer at the same time as Common Sandpiper numbers were reduced. There were singles in June and Sep 1978, three records of 1-2 birds in 1979, but the best year was 1980 when up to 4 were present on fly-ash throughout July and August. In 1981, there were 4 singles plus a flock of 3 on the bunded pool. Both 1982 and 1983 had two singles, while 1984 had 5 records, including two birds on July 4<sup>th</sup>. There was even a spring record on the fly-ash on May 14<sup>th</sup> 1985, but then no further records until autumn passage singles in 1989, 2010 and 2025.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 **10** 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 **90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis*  
Rare passage migrant.

PIBYDD CORS

The first and only record was an adult in breeding plumage seen first on May 7<sup>th</sup> 1990 and subsequently by many observers. It was accepted by BBRC.

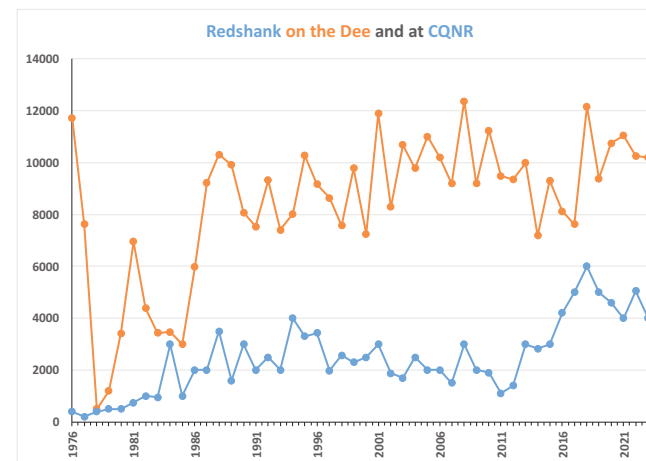


Marsh Sandpiper (not at CQNR): Glenn Morris

**Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

PIBYDD COESGOCH

Abundant passage migrant and winter visitor. Has bred. **RED-LISTED**  
International Importance: 2,400 National Importance: 940.



This is a species that we tend to take for granted, though up to one-third of the Dee population use the Reserve in the non-breeding season and peak numbers here are internationally-important. Large numbers feed on the river and their displacement onto the bunded pool by the incoming tide is quite a spectacle during the autumn migration. Successful breeding occurred on Oakenholt Marsh in 1988, when 2 adults were seen guarding 4 young in front of the West Hide between Jun

17<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. Although display and copulation were seen on the Marsh on Jan 4<sup>th</sup> 2015, no breeding has been proven since 1988. The graph shows that peak numbers using the Reserve have increased in recent years, though total numbers on the Dee have not changed.

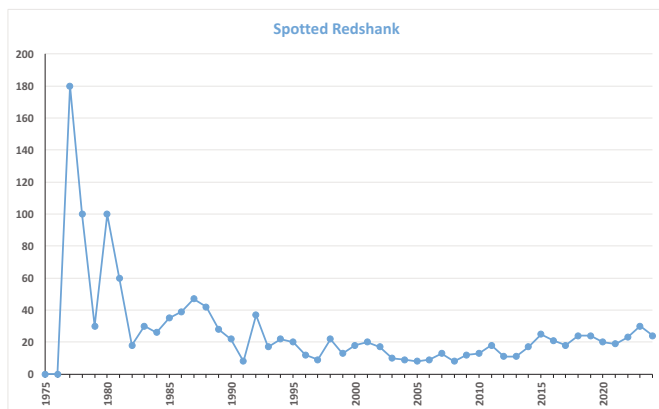


Redshanks and a Spotted Redshank: Mike Pollard

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*  
Common passage migrant and winter visitor.

PIBYDD COESGOCH MANNOG

This is one of the specialities of the Reserve with double figures present in autumn and a few overwintering. They are best seen on the bunded pools, or near the West Hide at high tide. They



sometimes form small groups that feed frantically in deeper water than Redshanks, but they can be overlooked when roosting among Redshanks. The first autumn migrants often include one or two in all-black breeding plumage. Although the Reserve remains a local stronghold for this species, peak numbers (in Sep-Oct) have steadily decreased over the years. The highest counts (up to 180 in 1977) were of

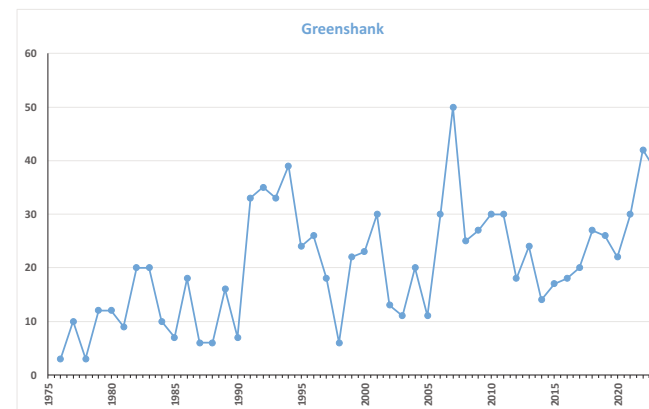
birds in front of the West Hide. Fortunately, it still remains an almost-daily sight on the bunded pool from early July through to March. Overwintering numbers, usually near the West Hide, reached a peak of 20 in the 1989/90 winter but are now usually in single figures. The graph suggests that the Reserve has nearly all the Dee estuary birds at times, although Reserve maxima are not directly comparable to monthly WeBS counts for the Dee estuary.



Spotted Redshank and Greenshank: Mike Pollard

**Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* PIBYDD COESWYRDD  
Common passage migrant and winter visitor.  
International Importance: 3,300. National Importance: 8.

This is another Reserve speciality of national importance which frequents the bunded pools with



Spotted Redshank. They tend to keep separate from other waders and form small groups, sometimes in less visible parts of the pools. The graph shows that peak numbers, which occur in Aug-Sep, increased in the 1990s and have remained high since. The highest count of 50 was in 2007. They overwinter regularly, in increasing numbers, on the bunded pools (up to 8 birds in Dec 2014).

**Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni*  
Rare vagrant.

CWTIAD-WENNOL ADEINDDU

An adult at RSPB Burton Mere on June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1988, accepted by BBRC, was also recorded on the Reserve by Tim Lloyd on the same day.

**Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*  
Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. **RED-LISTED**

GWYLAN GOESDDU

This is a species that has clearly become less frequent in recent years, along with other species associated with westerly gales. The first record was an immature flying up-river on Sep 9<sup>th</sup> 1979. Birds on Jan 4<sup>th</sup> 1981 and Dec 15<sup>th</sup> 1982 were seen during Force 6-7 westerlies. An adult and juvenile were seen on Feb 1<sup>st</sup> 1983, 2 juveniles on Sep 30<sup>th</sup> 1984 and a single on Jan 15<sup>th</sup> that year. No further records until two (adult and immature) on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1989. In 1990, singles were recorded on Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>, Mar 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and May 10<sup>th</sup>, and there was a record count of 9 on Dec 8<sup>th</sup>. Two on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2009. A single on Oct 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2 on Oct 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017, were brought in by high tides and NW gales and one was seen on the river on Jan 19<sup>th</sup> 2018.

Years seen in **bold**.

24 23 22 21 20 19 **18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Note on Gull numbers:** daytime counts of gulls at high tide (e.g. WeBS) do not reflect the true numbers using the estuary since the majority fly in to roost in the evenings. Some recent counts of evening numbers are now included.

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

GWYLAN BENDDU

*Common breeding resident and abundant winter visitor. RED-LISTED*

Numbers are very erratic, depending on the time of day as well as the season, with highest counts in the post-breeding period (July/Aug) and as birds fly in to roost in the evenings. The highest counts were of 15,000 birds in 1991 and 16,759 during the roost count in Jan 2019.

Nesting was attempted in 1979 (bunded pool) and during 2012-2014 (fly-ash lagoon) but without evidence of success. In 2019, for first time, a chick was successfully hatched on Aug 8<sup>th</sup> on the Fly-ash Lagoon Island. In 2021, 14 nesting pairs produced 35+ chicks during May and June. In 2022, nesting started in April and the first of 80 chicks were recorded on May 23<sup>rd</sup> and up to Jul 2<sup>nd</sup>. In 2023, 18 nests were counted, but evidence of bird flu was seen among the resident birds.

Attempted breeding underlined and confirmed breeding **bold and underlined** below.

24 **23 22 21** 20 **19** 18 17 16 15 14 13 **12** 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92  
91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

FECHAN

*Scarce passage migrant.*

The first record was an immature on Jan 30<sup>th</sup> 1983, followed by adults on Feb 13<sup>th</sup> and March 20<sup>th</sup>. The next record was on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1985 and an adult and immature were seen together on Aug 9<sup>th</sup> of that year. In 1988, an adult was present on the fly-ash lagoon from Apr 21<sup>st</sup> to May 3<sup>rd</sup>, followed by an immature on the bunded pool on May 5<sup>th</sup> 1989. One on June 29<sup>th</sup> 2003 and Feb 9<sup>th</sup> 2004. There was one record in the East Hide logbook of 5 birds on June 13<sup>th</sup> 2012. There was one on the bunded pools on Mar 13<sup>th</sup> 2013. There were 4 April-May records in 2017, including a 2<sup>nd</sup>-year bird and a juvenile chased by a Peregrine, followed by singles on Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018 and Feb 9<sup>th</sup> 2019. There was a juvenile long-staying bird on the fly-ash lagoon from Mar 7<sup>th</sup> 2022 until May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2022.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 **22 21** 20 **19 18 17** 16 15 14 **13 12** 11 10 09 08 07 **06 05 04 03** 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92  
91 **90 89 88** 87 86 **85 84 83** 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Mediterranean Gull** *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

GWYLAN MÔR Y CANOLDIR

*Scarce, but regular, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Although it was first recorded as long ago as Dec 9<sup>th</sup> 1979, records have become much more frequent in recent years as its breeding range has spread into England and Wales, including 11 records of 1-2 birds in June/July 2021. Records up to 2010 were in winter, but summer records have also been regular since then. Usually singles, but a maximum count of 4 in Jan 2019.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 **22 21 20 19 18 17** 16 **15** 14 13 **12 11 10 09 08** 07 06 **05 04 03** 02 **01 00** 99 **98 97 96 95 94 93 92**  
91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 **79 78 77 76**

**Common Gull** *Larus canus*

GWYLAN GWEUNYDD

*Common winter visitor.*

This species is relatively uncommon on the Reserve during the day, in spite of large winter numbers farther down the estuary and on inland farming areas. Birds fly into the hills to feed during the day and cross the Reserve in 1,000s in the winter evenings to roost on the sandflats. The count in Jan 2019 was 3,662. The highest previous count of 480 birds on Mar 13<sup>th</sup> 1989 may have included overflying birds. Most of the 110 seen on Mar 29<sup>th</sup> 2013, were roosting on the grazing fields during the day, but such flocks are uncommon.

**Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis*

GWYLAN FODRWYBIG

*Rare vagrant from North America.*

One was seen on Oakenholt Marsh on Aug 29<sup>th</sup> 2015, having been reported on Birdguides the day before. This was a new bird for the Reserve, since previous records were outside the Reserve, including the adult on Flint Marsh on Mar 30<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> 1990.

**Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus*

GWYLAN GEFNDDU FAWR

*Common year-round non-breeding visitor.*

Always a regular visitor to the mudflats with records from 1976 onwards. Maximum of 60 in Oct 1979 and over 100 on Nov 5<sup>th</sup> and Dec 30<sup>th</sup> 1989. A few can usually be found along the edge of the river. The evening gull count for this species in Jan 2019 was 54.

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*

GWYLAN Y GOGLEDD

*Rare winter visitor.*

The first Reserve record was a bird roosting in the river channel on Nov 29<sup>th</sup> 1979. Another flew over the bunded pool with Herring Gulls on Feb 12<sup>th</sup> 1983. There were further records on Oct 16<sup>th</sup> 1983, an immature in flight on Dec 29<sup>th</sup> 1984 and a bird in flight towards Flint castle on Aug 30<sup>th</sup> 1988 (detailed description on record). One was photographed while on Oakenholt Marsh for a few days in Jan 2018 and on Apr 4<sup>th</sup> 2018.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 **18** 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92  
91 90 89 **88** 87 86 85 **84 83** 82 81 80 **79** 78 77 76

**Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucooides*

GWYLAN YR ARCTIG

*Rare winter visitor.*

The first Reserve record was a 2<sup>nd</sup>-year bird at a Power Station silt tank on the early date of Aug 21<sup>st</sup> 1977. There was a subsequent record in Sep 1992 and two records in 2000: a first winter bird on Jan 20<sup>th</sup> and a summer bird on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Another was seen on Oakenholt Marsh on Dec 27<sup>th</sup> 2017 and the most recent was on Mar 14<sup>th</sup> 2021.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 **21** 20 19 18 **17** 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 **00** 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 **92**  
91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 **77 76**

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*  
Common year-round visitor.

GWYLAN PENWAIG

The highest logbook counts were of 1,000 in 1991 and 370 on Sep 12<sup>th</sup> 2012. They do, of course, nest locally on town roof-tops and are often seen in flight overhead, but numbers in high-tide roosts are relatively low. The evening gull count in Jan 2019 found 2,459 birds.

A bird ringed as a 3<sup>rd</sup> year bird in Strathclyde in April 1979 spent 3 consecutive winters on the Reserve 1982-84.

**Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis*  
Scarce, but regular, post-breeding migrant.

GWYLAN GOESFELEN

The first record was of a single on July 7<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> 1984 and the second was present from Nov 24<sup>th</sup> to Dec 25<sup>th</sup> 1985, but most subsequent records have been in July-Oct, apart from one on the bunded pool on Mar 8<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> 2015. The continued NW post-breeding spread of this Mediterranean species is a matter of record.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*  
Common year-round breeding visitor.

GWYLAN GEFNDDU FACH

Present all year in small numbers 1976-78, but the maximum count of 800 was in Aug 1980, with 500 on Aug 6<sup>th</sup> 1987 and 600 on Sep 6<sup>th</sup> 1988. The evening gull count in Jan 2019 found 519 birds. In recent years, one seemed especially fond of feeding on crabs from the bunded pools and a pair raised three chicks on a nearby Power Station roof in 2023.

**Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus sandvicensis*  
Uncommon passage migrant.

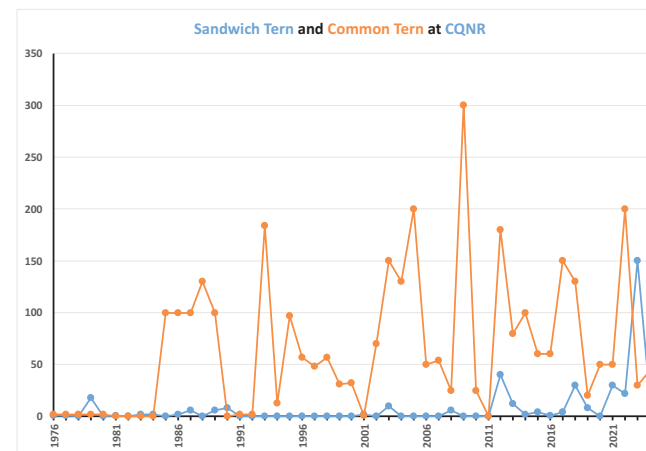
MÔR-WENNOL BIGDDU



There was a massive recent count of 150 on May 7<sup>th</sup> 2023, compared with previous maxima of 18 on June 27<sup>th</sup> 1979, 30 on May 13<sup>th</sup> 2018 and 40 on June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012. This species was often seen between late June and late August in the 1980s, but most recent records have been in spring.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76



**Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons*

MÔR-WENNOL FACH

Very scarce passage migrant. **RED-LISTED**

Very occasionally significant flocks have turned up, but very irregular in recent years. The best year was 1989 when a flock of up to 30 was present most days between Aug 11<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, followed by a flock of 20 on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> 2003. Nest sites in North Wales gradually disappeared until only the Gronant colony and a smaller one at Point of Ayr now remain. Most Reserve records were in Aug, but the 10 birds on May 11<sup>th</sup> 2014 were a welcome return. More recent singles were on Jun 7<sup>th</sup> 2017 and July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

MÔR-WENNOL GYFFREDIN

Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Has bred.

A pair nested on the bunded pool in 1977, but the two chicks died. They tried again unsuccessfully in 1979 and 1980, but adults from the Shotton Steelworks were often seen feeding young on the bunded pool during this time. During 2006-2008, the Shotton colony raised over 1,000 chicks each year, but no nesting took place there in 2009 and 2010. The highest count on the Reserve was of 250-350 on May 17<sup>th</sup> 2009, possibly related to their absence from the nesting site. The species may have been regarded as too common in the 1980s to report peak numbers, but there is no evidence from the graph (above) that numbers changed much over the years, despite large fluctuations at the Shotton colony. They regularly arrive in mid-April and are gone by early September, but an immature was present from Oct 12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> 1988. Recorded on 13<sup>th</sup> Aug 1974.

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*  
*Scarce passage migrant. RED-LISTED*

MÔR-WENNOL Y GOGLEDD

Possibly under-recorded, but records have been less frequent in recent years. The highest count was of 26 with 9 common terns on Sep 1<sup>st</sup> 1988, until a remarkable flock of 50 was recorded on Apr 24<sup>th</sup> 2017. Five were seen together on Aug 27<sup>th</sup> 2006 and 7 on May 13<sup>th</sup> 2018, but most other records were of 1-3 birds.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 **23** 22 **21** 20 **19** **18** **17** 16 15 14 **13** 12 11 10 09 08 **07** **06** 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 **92**  
**91** **90** **89** **88** 87 **86** **85** **84** 83 **82** **81** 80 79 **78** **77** 76

**White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus*  
*Rare passage migrant.*

CORSWENNOL ADEINWEN

One stayed briefly over the fly-ash lagoon on June 16<sup>th</sup> 2016, before continuing to Shotton Pools and Burton Mere RSPB later on the same day. Accepted by WRBC.

**Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger*  
*Scarce passage migrant.*

CORSWENNOL DDU

Many will be surprised to learn that this species was once a regular spring visitor to Oakenholt Marsh with high counts of 12 on April 28<sup>th</sup> 1987 and 7 on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1988. The first record was a single with 20 Common Tern on May 18<sup>th</sup> 1979. The only autumn records were in each of the 3 years 1982-1984 (Sep 21<sup>st</sup> 1982, Sep 7-10<sup>th</sup> 1983, Sep 30<sup>th</sup> 1984 and Oct 6<sup>th</sup> 1984). The most recent record was of a bird on the fly-ash lagoon on April 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> 2004. Recently, there were 5 on the river on Apr 30<sup>th</sup> 2017 and a late bird on Oct 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017, 3 on May 10<sup>th</sup> 2019, 1 on the mudflat from West Hide on Sep 18<sup>th</sup> 2021 and 2 seen feeding over the river on Jun 1<sup>st</sup> 2023. Black Terns rarely breed in the UK but still occur widely on passage.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 **23** 22 **21** 20 **19** **18** **17** 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 **04** 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 **94** 93 **92**  
**91** **90** **89** **88** **87** 86 85 **84** **83** **82** **81** 80 79 **78** **77** 76

**Great Skua** *Stercorarius skua*  
*Very scarce passage migrant.*

SGIWEN FAWR

The first record was of one harassing gulls and terns over the revetment on Sep 8<sup>th</sup> 1980, followed by 3 during NW gales on Oct 7<sup>th</sup> 1988. One was present off Oakenholt Marsh for 3 days in 1990 (Feb 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> and again on Mar 1<sup>st</sup>). There was another in Sep 1995 and 2 harassing terns on Jul 21<sup>st</sup> 2013. One was seen and photographed on the banks of the fly-ash lagoon on 18/9/16 and later died there. Another was seen over the revetment on Aug 25<sup>th</sup> 2019.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 **19** 18 17 **16** 15 14 **13** 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 **95** 94 93 92  
**91** **90** **89** **88** 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 **80** 79 78 77 76

**Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus*  
*Rare passage migrant.*

SGIWEN FRECH

The first record for the Reserve was one with 2 Arctic Skuas on July 30<sup>th</sup> 1989, followed by 2 birds on Oct 6<sup>th</sup> 1989. Two were seen during the gales of Oct 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017, a dark-phase and a light-phase, both with visible "spoons".

**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus*  
*Very scarce passage migrant.*

SGIWEN Y GOGLEDD

Three singles in July/Aug 1977 were the first Reserve records, followed by singles on Dec 27<sup>th</sup> 1982, Sep 4<sup>th</sup> and Oct 23<sup>rd</sup> 1983 and Oct 30<sup>th</sup> 1986. During Sep 23-25 1984, there were 7 skua records, all probably this species. There were 3 together on Oct 8<sup>th</sup> 1987, 4 (3 light-phase) together on Oct 7<sup>th</sup> 1988, the highest count for the Reserve, plus 2 singles that year and 2 light-phase adults on July 30<sup>th</sup> 1989. Two together on July 30<sup>th</sup> 1989 and further singles in 1991 and Oct 1994. One was seen during the gales of Oct 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017. One dark form was over the bunded pool on 17/08/19 and 2 were seen from West Hide on 24/08/19. A juvenile chasing gulls was driven off by the gulls on Aug 17<sup>th</sup> 2022.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 **22** 21 20 **19** 18 **17** 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 **94** 93 92  
**91** **90** **89** **88** **87** **86** 85 **84** **83** **82** 81 80 79 78 **77** 76

**Little Auk** *Alle alle*  
*Rare winter visitor. RED-LISTED*

CARFIL BACH



Little Auk: Peter Haslem

One was seen by many and photographed resting on the bunded pool on Jan 10<sup>th</sup> 2016.

**Guillemot** *Uria aalge*  
*Scarce autumn migrant and winter visitor.*

GWYLOG

Nearly all records were singles brought up the river by rising high tides from Aug to March. There were two records of 2 birds on the river during Oct-Dec, 1989 and another 2 on Sep 12<sup>th</sup> 2006.

24 23 **22** 21 20 **19** 18 **17** **16** 15 14 13 12 11 **10** 09 08 07 **06** 05 **04** 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 **94** **93** **92**  
**91** **90** **89** **88** 87 86 **85** 84 83 82 81 **80** 79 78 77 76

**Razorbill** *Alca torda*  
Rare winter visitor.

LLURS

The first record was of a single on the river on Jan 7<sup>th</sup> 1984. Singles were recorded on most high tides during Oct/Nov 1987 and on Jan 2<sup>nd</sup> and Nov 21<sup>st</sup> in 1988. Two were seen on the high tide of Oct 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017, the first record since 1993.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 **17** 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 **93 92**  
91 90 89 **88 87** 86 85 **84** 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Puffin** *Fratercula arctica*  
Rare visitor.

PÅL



A first for the reserve, one was seen briefly and photographed at high tide on May 15<sup>th</sup> 2022.

**Red-throated Diver** *Gavia stellata*  
Very scarce winter visitor.

TROCHYDD GYDDFGOCH

The first record was of an oiled bird that walked onto the mud bank in front of West Hide on Nov 8<sup>th</sup> 1986. Sightings on the river were frequent in 1988 (Feb 17<sup>th</sup> and Dec 6<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>) and 1989 (Jan, Feb and Dec), possibly the same bird throughout the 1988/89 winter. There were singles on the bunded pool in Oct 1993 and on Oct 6<sup>th</sup> 2012, and on the river on May 11<sup>th</sup> 2014 and Dec 13<sup>th</sup> 2015.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 **15 14 13 12** 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 **93 92**  
91 90 **89 88 87 86 85** 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Black-throated Diver** *Gavia arctica*  
Rare winter visitor.

TROCHYDD GYDDFDDU

The first sighting was from the West Hide on Dec 8<sup>th</sup> 1987. One bird spent the winter of 1987/88 on Shotwick Lake, so this may be the same bird. It was also seen on the Reserve on Jan 8<sup>th</sup> and Mar 5<sup>th</sup> 1988. The most recent record was on Nov 5<sup>th</sup> 1989.

**Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer*  
Rare winter visitor.

TROCHYDD MAWR

The only record for the Reserve was on Nov 8<sup>th</sup> 2022.

**European Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus*  
Rare passage migrant on high tides.

PEDRYN DRYCIN

There were two records of singles in Oct-Nov, 1977 and then an extraordinary day of storms on Sep 23<sup>rd</sup> 1984, when 5 birds were seen, along with Leach's Petrels and skuas.

**Leach's Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates leucorhous*  
Uncommon passage migrant on high tides. **RED-LISTED**

PEDRYN DRYCIN LEACH

This species is closely-associated on the Reserve with very high tides and NW autumn gales, which do not always coincide. The first record was a single on Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> 1977, followed by three records totalling 25 birds in Sep 78 and 1 on Sep 14<sup>th</sup> 1980. There were several sightings of up to 2 birds on Sep 23<sup>rd</sup> 1984 and close views of singles in 1987 on Sep 17<sup>th</sup> (flying over the flooded marsh) and Oct 8<sup>th</sup> (settled on the river briefly before returning towards the sea). In 1988, NW gales on Sep 12<sup>th</sup> resulted in 6 sightings of 1-2 birds and another on Oct 7<sup>th</sup>. Singles on Dec 24<sup>th</sup> 1989 and Sep 24<sup>th</sup> 1995 and 2 on Aug 30<sup>th</sup> and Sep 23<sup>rd</sup> 2004. The highest count, on Sep 21<sup>st</sup> 1990, was of 15 birds, one of which was taken by a Peregrine, and the same year had another high count of 10 on Sep 7<sup>th</sup>. There was another count of 15 in front of West Hide on Sep 16<sup>th</sup> 2001. In 2017, 2 were seen near Flint castle on Oct 5<sup>th</sup> and another 2 from West Hide on Oct 22<sup>nd</sup>. In 2022, up to 3 were recorded following the strong NW gales on Sep 26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup>. There was a rare spring occurrence of a single on Mar 19<sup>th</sup> 2007.



Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 **22** 21 20 19 18 **17** 16 15 14 13 12 11 **10** 09 08 **07** 06 05 **04** 03 02 **01** 00 99 98 97 96 **95** 94 93 92  
91 90 **89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80** 79 **78 77 76**

**Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis*  
Rare passage migrant on high tides.

ADERYN DRYCIN Y GRAIG

The first record was on April 19<sup>th</sup> 1981, followed by another on Sep 11<sup>th</sup> 1983. The highest count of 6 was during NW gales on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1987. On Sep 13<sup>th</sup> 1988, one was found exhausted on the marsh road and was sheltered in the hide for two days until it died. There were further singles on Aug 29<sup>th</sup> 1989 and Apr 25<sup>th</sup> 1990.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 **90 89 88 87** 86 85 84 **83 82 81** 80 79 78 77 76

**Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus*  
Rare passage migrant on high tides.

ADERYN DRYCIN MANAW



The first single was recorded on Sep 30<sup>th</sup> 1975, followed by others on Sep 27<sup>th</sup> and Oct 7<sup>th</sup> 1989 (when winds were not very strong!). One was seen flying up-river from the East Hide on Sep 19<sup>th</sup> 2012 and autumn gales in 2017 brought one close to the West Hide on Sep 11<sup>th</sup> and again on Oct 5<sup>th</sup>.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 **17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*  
Rare vagrant.

CICONIA GWYN

The only record for the Reserve is of a single bird flying north-east on Sep 29<sup>th</sup> 2005.

**Gannet** *Morus bassanus*  
Rare passage migrant on high tides.

HUGAN



Singles were seen on Sep 17<sup>th</sup> 1975 and Aug 21<sup>st</sup> 1982. One died on the marsh in June 1983 and another was found dead on March 26<sup>th</sup> 1987. One adult was seen on July 9<sup>th</sup> 1989 and there was then a long gap until a record from West Hide on Feb 6<sup>th</sup> 2013. Autumn gales and high tides in 2017 produced 5 sightings: the first was an adult on Sep 11<sup>th</sup>, while subsequent records on Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> were of juveniles. The most recent record was on May 28<sup>th</sup> 2022.

Years when seen in **bold**:

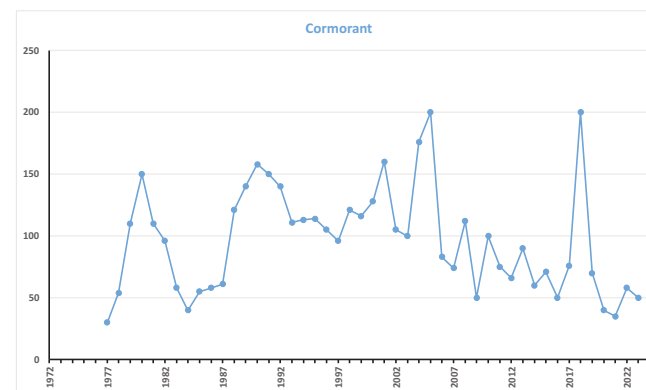
24 23 **22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

MULFRAN

Common non-breeding visitor, present all year.

International Importance: 1,200 National Importance: 620.



This species can be seen at any time of day, year or tide on the Reserve. Average peak numbers have declined slightly to 87 during the last 20 years from 110 in the previous 20 years. The highest count was of 200 in both 2005 and 2018. A juvenile on Jun 8<sup>th</sup> 2014 had been ringed on Denny Island shortly before. Large numbers (40-50) used to roost on outflow piles in the river opposite the Nature

Trail; this area is little visited by birdwatchers since National Grid built over the Nature Trail, but cormorants still roost there.

**Shag** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*  
Rare winter visitor.

MULFRAN WERDD

A rare visitor to Flintshire, although it nests in good numbers from the Little Orme westwards. Singles were recorded on Dec 19<sup>th</sup> 1979, Oct 24<sup>th</sup> 1980 and Jun 21<sup>st</sup> 1989. The most recent were an immature with Cormorants on Jan 5<sup>th</sup> 2007 and singles on Oakenholt Marsh on Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 2017 and Jan 6<sup>th</sup> 2018.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*  
Rare vagrant.

IBIS DU

A bird on Oakenholt Marsh on Jan 23<sup>rd</sup> 2012, was the only record, until Colin Wells saw 30 birds fly over the Reserve from Flint on Sep 5<sup>th</sup> 2025.

**Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*  
Scarce passage migrant.

LLWYBIG

This species started nesting in England in 1998/99 and is firmly established in Norfolk, where the number of young birds raised reached double figures in 2010/11. The first Reserve records can be found on [deestuary.com](http://deestuary.com) in 1997 (1 bird) and 1998 (3) followed by 2 immatures on Oakenholt Marsh on Sep 26<sup>th</sup> 1999. There was one on Flint Marsh in 2001 and another on the Reserve on Aug 22<sup>nd</sup> 2003. In 2008, they were present from Aug 24<sup>th</sup> - Oct 18<sup>th</sup>, with a maximum count of 3 on Sep 30<sup>th</sup>. Singles were seen again four times in 2009 and another was present on Nov 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> 2011. A single bird was seen on Oakenholt Marsh on the high tides of Jan 12<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> 2012. There were 3 at Flint Sands on Oct 4<sup>th</sup> 2018 and in 2019, there was an adult in breeding plumage on Apr 25<sup>th</sup>, followed by 2



Spoonbill: Peter Haslem

birds on Sep 28<sup>th</sup>. One was present for most of August 2021 and 4 were regularly seen in front of the West Hide from Aug 11<sup>th</sup> to Sep 4<sup>th</sup> 2022. Further singles on Jul 19<sup>th</sup> 2022 and from Sep 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> 2023.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 **23 22 21 20 19 18** 17 16 15 14 13 **12 11 10 09 08 07**  
06 05 04 03 02 **01 00 99 98 97** 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89  
88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*  
Rare non-breeding visitor.

CRÉYR GWARTHEG

This species was seen and photographed for the first time on the Reserve when it made a brief visit to the bunded pools on Sep 5<sup>th</sup> 2014. Numbers visiting the UK had increased dramatically during the previous 10 years and a pair nested successfully at RSPB Burton Mere in 2017. A single bird was present again on the bunded pools on Aug 13<sup>th</sup> 2017 and two were seen briefly on supplementary feed put out for sheep on Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 2022.



Cattle Egret: Peter Haslem

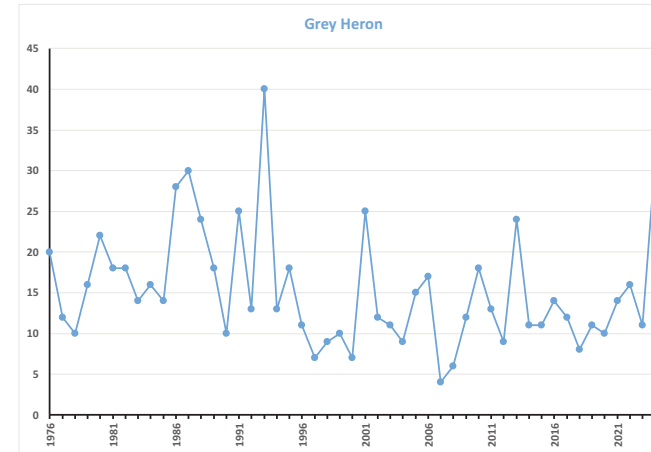
**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*  
Non-breeding visitor, year round.

CRÉYR GLAS

The graph suggests that the number of Grey Herons using the Reserve decreased during the 1990s and is now stable, with peak numbers of 10-15 occurring in autumn/early winter. The highest ever count was of 40 on Oct 3<sup>rd</sup> 1993.



Grey Heron: Peter Haslem



**Great White Egret** *Ardea alba*  
Fairly common non-breeding visitor.

CRÉYR MAWR GWYN



Great White Egrets: Peter Haslem

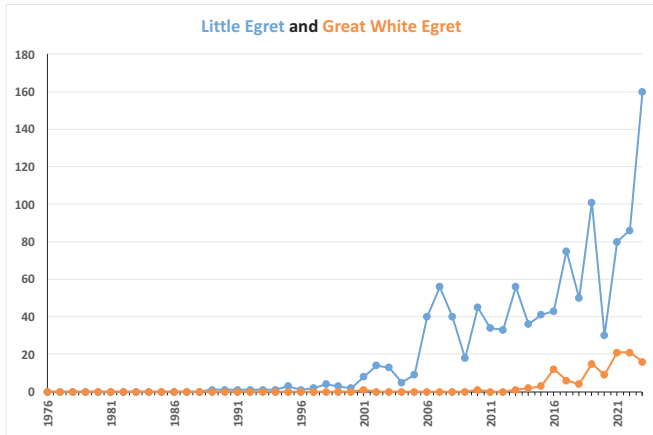
The first record for Oakenholt Marsh was during Aug 16<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> 2001 and a bird returned on Sep 28 - 30<sup>th</sup>. They were not recorded again until June 24<sup>th</sup>, Oct 28<sup>th</sup> and Nov 4<sup>th</sup> 2011. One was seen on Oakenholt Marsh on May 25<sup>th</sup> 2013 and Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 2014 but they were usually seen across the river at Parkgate/Burton. Several records of 1-3 birds in 2015 were actually across the river, but one frequented the Reserve itself in Nov 2016. From 2017 onwards, the species became regular on the Reserve with up to 4 separate birds on July 31<sup>st</sup> including both grey-billed and yellow-billed birds in June/July (the bill darkens when acquiring summer plumage). This species was removed from the UK Rarities List in 2006 and breeding in England was proven for the first time in 2012. The highest Reserve count was 21 on Sep 16<sup>th</sup> 2022, after they had begun to nest on the English side of the estuary in 2019.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*  
Common non-breeding visitor.

CRÉYR BACH

International Importance: 1,100 National Importance: 110.

The first record was from Oakenholt Marsh during Sep 14<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> 1989, the year before it was removed from the UK Rarities List. The highest count of 56 on Aug 26<sup>th</sup> 2007 was beaten 10 years later by 75 on Sep 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017 and then 101 in Aug 2019 and 160 on Sep 12<sup>th</sup> 2023. One bird in Aug/Sep 2013 had been



ringed at Porth Penrhyn near Bangor in July that same year.



Great White Egret and Little Egret: Mike Pollard

### Changes in frequency of visits to the Reserve by Birds of Prey.

It is very difficult to quantify changes in numbers of birds of prey (or any bird seen only in small numbers) that have used the Reserve during its 50-year history. Peak numbers are rarely more than 1-2 and the total number of records, although the best we can do, may double if twice as many Reserve visits are made. Currently, birdwatchers record observations on the Reserve nearly every day of the year, judging by Birdtrack records alone, while in the 1980s birds were recorded in the hide logbooks on 60-80% of days. Assuming equal competence at ID and finding raptors (which I don't doubt), we might expect total records per annum to increase by 50%, even if there were no actual change in numbers. If the graphs in what follows show an increase of less than 50% between the 1980s and today, it is possible that there has been no actual increase. On the other hand, any decreases on the graphs are likely to reflect even greater declines in reality. There was also a "dark" period from 1990 to 2001 (including Power Station construction) when there were no available logbooks or Bird Reports that kept details of raptor sightings, although the monthly counts of the Clwyd Monitoring Team provided good data on wildfowl and waders. For some nesting species, like Peregrine, Kestrel and Sparrowhawk, the graph may possibly show "spikes" in the breeding years compared with non-breeding years. If, as in 1989, an "escaped" Merlin tamely takes up residence on the Reserve, another odd spike will be seen. In spite of these problems, the graphs, for the most part, do reflect the changing fortunes of birds of prey during the last 50 years that regular visitors to the Reserve would instinctively feel have happened and only the Buzzard shows an increase.

Please note: number of sightings in graphs = total number of birds, so a flock of 2 and a flock of 4 would equal 6 "sightings" in the graphs.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*  
Very scarce passage migrant.

GWALCH PYSGOD

The first Reserve record was in Sep 2006. Other logbook records are of two autumn passage birds in 2008 (Sep 7<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>), a spring bird resting by the bunded pool on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009 and another autumn bird on Aug 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> 2014. The most recent flew over the fly-ash lagoon on Sep 7<sup>th</sup> 2022. Tracking devices have shown that some Scottish nesters migrate through North Wales.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 **22** 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 **14** 13 12 11 10 **09 08** 07 **06** 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Honey-buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*  
Rare summer visitor.

BODA MÊL

The only record is of a bird crossing the bunded pools, chased by gulls, terns and egrets, on the afternoon of July 16<sup>th</sup> 2014.

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*  
Uncommon resident and winter visitor.

GWALCH GLAS



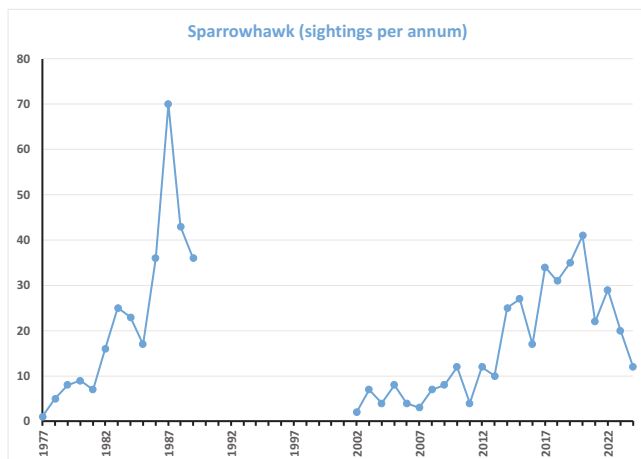
Sparrowhawk: Mike Pollard



Sparrowhawk: Peter Haslem

This species was seen in winter only in 1976-78 and mainly in autumn in 1979-82. From 1983-87, they were recorded in all months of the year and they appear to have nested on, or close to, the Reserve in 1987. There were 70 Sparrowhawk sightings that year, compared with 12 and 10 in 2012-2013. The most common prey recorded on the Reserve is the Starling, which reached amazing numbers on the Reserve during 1983-89, before they crashed in the 1990s. Like many raptors, Sparrowhawks prefer to nest where there is an abundance of prey in the summer months. Other specific prey items recorded over the years include Redshank, Blackbird and Twite. Piles of Woodpigeon feathers found close to hedgerows on the Reserve are almost certainly to work of female Sparrowhawks. The annual number of logbook sightings averaged 28 in the 10-year period

1980-1989, down to only 7 in 2004-2013 and back to 28 again during 2014-2023. Taking the increased observer coverage into account, however, current numbers of Sparrowhawk visits to the Reserve are almost certainly much lower than in the 1980s.



1980-1989, down to only 7 in 2004-2013 and back to 28 again during 2014-2023. Taking the increased observer coverage into account, however, current numbers of Sparrowhawk visits to the Reserve are almost certainly much lower than in the 1980s.

**Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*  
Rare non-breeding visitor.

GWALCH MARTH

Although the forests of Wales are now the UK stronghold for Goshawks, which are increasing in North Wales, they tend to stay close to their nesting areas all year round. Indeed, all records relate to the late 1980s when a pair was nesting in the Flintshire hills above the Dee estuary. The best record was of an adult female landing in the grazing fields at 10 am on Sep 30<sup>th</sup> 1984 and being mobbed by gulls, crows and magpies, before a Sparrowhawk emerged from Rockcliffe woods to dive-bomb it and chase it off. Another, possibly the same, bird was seen to put up a Short-eared Owl from Oakenholt Marsh on Oct 7<sup>th</sup> 1984. There were further records on Mar 17<sup>th</sup> 1986, Aug 13<sup>th</sup> 1987, Nov 10<sup>th</sup> 1988 and Sep 18<sup>th</sup> 1991.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 **88 87 86 85 84** 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75

**Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*  
Uncommon local resident and winter visitor.

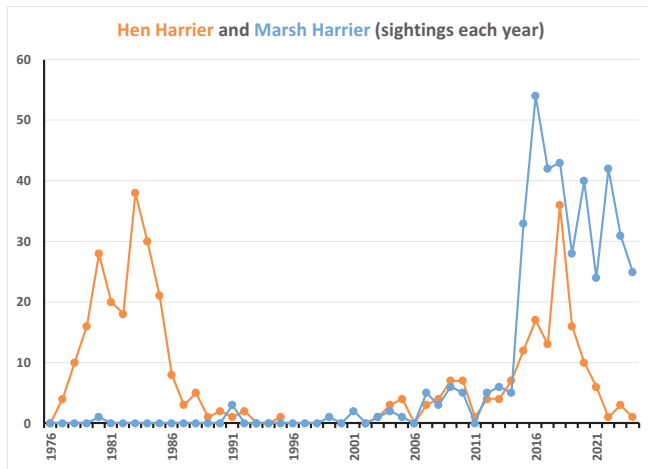
BODA'R GWERNI

The first record was of a female on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1980, followed over 10 years later by 3 autumn records in 1991 (Aug 11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and Sep 1<sup>st</sup>). There were 2 juveniles together on the edge of Burton Marsh on Sep



Marsh Harrier: Mike Pollard

18<sup>th</sup> 2013. On Dec 15<sup>th</sup> 2014, there were: "2 Marsh Harrier (both juv) and 2 Peregrine on Oakenholt Marsh. A juvenile female Peregrine caught a Teal and carried it on to Oakenholt Marsh. One of the harriers pursued the Peregrine and knocked it off the prey, claiming the duck for itself. A few seconds later the second Marsh Harrier tried to muscle in on the stolen quarry and in the ensuing struggle, the Teal incredibly flew off seemingly unhurt" (from [deestuaries.com](http://deestuaries.com)). In 2015, all 33 records were during Aug-Dec, but on Jul 24<sup>th</sup> 2016, one caught a duck and ate it in front of the West Hide. Historically on the Dee estuary, Marsh Harriers were passage migrants until they began to over-winter in 2007/08. They first nested successfully at Frodsham Marsh in 2010 and they attempted to nest in 2014 at Neston Reedbed, where a winter roost was well-established by 2016/17. By 2022 and 2023, nesting success was achieved at both Neston and Burton Mere. The graph of sightings of Marsh Harrier from the Reserve mimics their fortunes on the Dee as a whole.



Years when seen in **bold**:  
**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16**  
**15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07**  
**06 05 04 03 02 (01 00 99 98**  
**97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90) 89**  
**88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80**  
**79 78 77 76 75**

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*  
 Scarce winter visitor. **RED-LISTED**

BODA TINWYN



Hen Harrier: Hazel Rothwell

There were records in winter 1977/78 and a male in winter 1978/79. It was regular in 1979/80 winters with 2 males in Nov/Dec 1980. Two males were seen with a Merlin "following-on" on Mar 6<sup>th</sup> 1981 and 2 ringtails together on Jan 6<sup>th</sup> 1982, but decline was rapid after 1986. Only one record in 1989 (Nov 5<sup>th</sup>) and that was on the revetment. Many of the sightings in recent years have been from across the river, either along the revetment or over White Sands, but the very high number of 2018 records included many quartering the pools and the marsh. The resurgence of sightings during 2015-2020 may have been temporary and the

species is now rare on the Reserve. Taking the increased observer coverage into account, however, even the 2015-2020 sightings do not represent a recovery to the levels of the 1980s.

**Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus*  
 Rare passage migrant.

BODA LLWYDWYN

The well-known sub-adult female on Burton Marsh (BBRC-accepted) was visible from the West Hide flying along the Welsh part of the Marsh on Sep 30<sup>th</sup> 2017 and again on Oct 1<sup>st</sup> 2017.

**Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus*  
 Rare passage migrant. **RED-LISTED**

BODA MONTAGU

The first and only record was of a male crossing the bunded pool and quartering the grazing fields on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1980.

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*

BARCUD COCH

Very scarce visitor, mainly in summer.



Red Kite: Glenn Morris

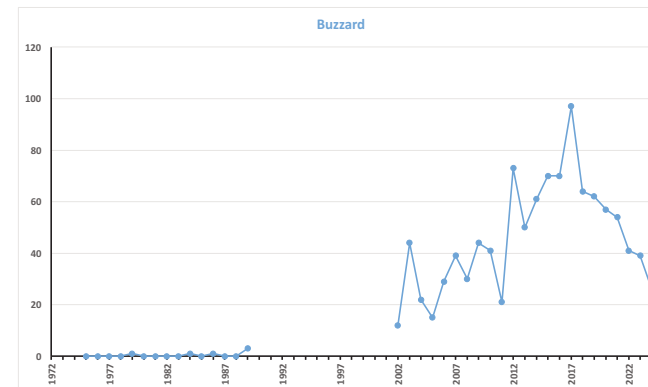
The ten records since 2003 reflect the continuing spread of Red Kites into North Wales over the past 10 years. Most records are of non-breeding birds in the summer months. After the first record in 2003, one flew over Oakenholt Marsh from Flint on April 15<sup>th</sup> 2005. There was a further record in 2009, one of 2 together flying from Flint Castle on May 26<sup>th</sup> 2012 ("northwalesbirding") and then three records of singles in 2013 (Mar 29<sup>th</sup>, May 1<sup>st</sup> and July 27<sup>th</sup>). There was another flyover on Aug 10<sup>th</sup> 2022.

Years when seen in **bold**:

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09**  
**08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93**  
**92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77**  
**76**

**Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*  
 Fairly common resident.

BWNCATH



Until the 1990s, Buzzards were quite a rarity on the Reserve with only three records during 1976-1989, all in Aug/Sep. Although it is not possible to pinpoint exactly when the change took place, by 2003 they had become quite a common sight and this is related to the rapid westward spread of breeding Buzzards that began in the late 1980s. By 2009, it was recorded almost

every month with a maximum count of 4 birds together. They are now seen year-round on the Reserve and, although they have not yet nested, sightings are boosted when they nest close to the Reserve, as in 2012 when 50% of all records were in May, June and July. The maximum count of 5 birds together on May 20<sup>th</sup> 2012, included a displaying pair. In Feb 2013, two were found dead close to each other on the Marsh, thought to have been shot or poisoned; even so, 30% of records were in the summer that year. There was a displaying pair over the Rockcliffe woodland on Mar 19<sup>th</sup> 2015 and the highest count was 11 seen 'kettling' over the reserve on Aug 13<sup>th</sup> 2023.

Years when seen in **bold**:

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02** (01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90) **89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*  
*Scarce visitor.*

TYLLUAN WEN

One was seen flying along the railway line on March 5<sup>th</sup> 1977 and one was found dead near the helipad on June 11<sup>th</sup> 2009. Another was near the helipad at 8PM on Oct 24<sup>th</sup> 2016 and one was seen hunting at 6.30AM on Sep 29<sup>th</sup> 2017. One was photographed on the window ledge of the West Hide with a dead vole on Mar 18<sup>th</sup> 2019; it was also seen hunting around the bunded pools in the early afternoon. One on the Power Station on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2024 flew north across the river.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua*

TYLLUAN FACH

*Once a regular breeding resident, but now rare (no recent records).*

Recorded Oct 31<sup>st</sup> and Dec 14<sup>th</sup> 1976 and summer of 77/78. A pair bred successfully in 1980 (raising 1 young), 1981 and 1983, probably in 1982, and possibly in 1988, when 3 birds were seen together on Aug 25<sup>th</sup>. Other records were singles only outside the breeding season in 1984, 1985/86 and 1989. One by the Field Study Centre in Oct 1993 and one sheltering under a boulder on the field being cleared of debris post-construction on Jan 4<sup>th</sup> 1997.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75

**Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*

TYLLUAN GLUSTIÖG

*Very scarce winter visitor.*

This species occurs in winter on the English side of the estuary, but it is very scarce there also. There were singles on Nov 17<sup>th</sup> 1979, Feb 10<sup>th</sup> and April 16<sup>th</sup> 1980 and one on Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 2008. The 1982/83 winter was exceptional with 21 sightings from October to April (including two together), down to 8 sightings in 1983/84. The 1989 and 2004 birds were on the marsh across the river but the 2 records in 2019 and the most recent one on Nov 25<sup>th</sup> 2021 may not have crossed from England (though seen from the West Hide). One was hunting along the riverside marsh near the helipad in the late afternoon of Nov 11<sup>th</sup> 2015. Hunting over the grazing fields has not been recorded. Both the first record on Jun 11<sup>th</sup> 1979 and the most recent of one along the revetment on Jun 26<sup>th</sup> 2016, were unusual summer records. (Although Long-eared Owls were not specifically excluded and one was present at RSPB Burton Mere in Feb/Mar 2015, summer sightings of this species are even less likely).

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 (21) 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco*  
*Possible breeding resident.*

TYLLUAN FRECH

This species is probably under-recorded because the Reserve is rarely visited at night. Thus, one was heard during a moth-trapping event in 1988 but the only other records were in Feb -April, 1977, March 1983 and April 1984. One was reported from the Reserve entrance at 6.30AM on Sep 30<sup>th</sup> 2017.

**Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*

GLAS Y DORLAN

*Fairly common winter visitor.*



Kingfisher: Mike Pollard

This species is recorded regularly from September through March, sometimes 2 together, and has been recorded in every year since records began. They are usually conveniently perched in front of West Hide, Middle Hide or Field Study Centre. In 1976, it was described as "resident" with records in nearly every month, but there is no evidence that it ever nested. It has been a winter visitor since then, with occasional records in July/August. During the freezing winter of 1981/82, there were no records after Jan 3<sup>rd</sup> 1982 and no subsequent records for the 1982/83 winter, but a male returned in Nov. 1983.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** *Dryobates minor*

CNOCELL FRAITH FACH

*Rare winter visitor. RED-LISTED*

The first record on Oct 21<sup>st</sup> 1979 was from gardens near the old entrance on Kelsterton Road. Then, in the winter of 1986/87 and bird was seen in the bunded pool willows on Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec 22<sup>nd</sup> and Feb 6<sup>th</sup>. There was a further record from the Nature Trail in Oct 1993.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*

CNOCELL FRAITH FAWR

*Fairly common, non-breeding visitor.*

By far the most common woodpecker on the Reserve. The annual number of sightings has been around 10-15 per year since 1985, higher than the earlier years of 1978-1984 when the average was only 3 sightings per year. This reflects the development of larger trees near the hides and/or provision of bird feeders. There are very few April-May records (except in 2009, when there was one in each month) and breeding on the Reserve itself has never been confirmed. The highest count was 3 together on Oct 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017.

**Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis*  
Uncommon passage migrant.

CNOCELL WERDD

The first records were in April 1983, with one flying to the revetment on the 15<sup>th</sup> and one near the old entrance to the Power Station (Kelsterton Road) on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Subsequent records were a juvenile on Aug 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 1986, one on Aug 28<sup>th</sup> 1989, one in 2006 and a juvenile on Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> 2013. More frequent in some years with 7 records on 2016. Nearly all records have been in April/May or Aug-Oct.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

CUDYLL COCH

Fairly-common post-breeding visitor. Has bred. **RED-LISTED**

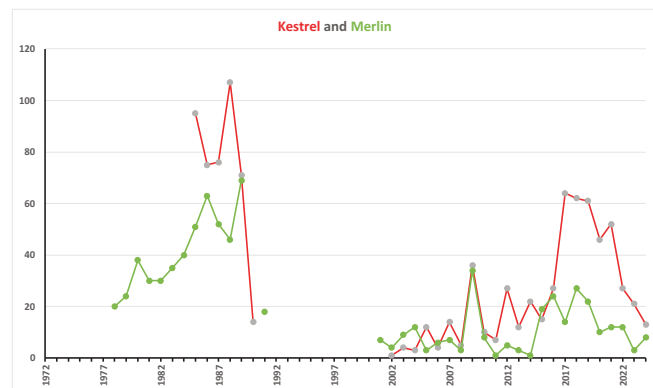


Kestrel (not CQNR): Glenn Morris

In the early years, a pair of Kestrels appear to have been present daily and were consequently under-recorded as too common to merit a mention in the logbooks. In contrast, sightings these days, though not rare, are certainly considered worth recording. Breeding success was confirmed only in 1977 (2 young), 1980 (3 young) and 1983 (1 young), with possible breeding in 1981 and 1982. Many summer records in 1988 and 3 birds on the power station on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1989 suggested probable breeding. There were 36 records of 1-2 birds from May-Nov in 2009 and two family parties were seen hunting on the Reserve on Sep 28<sup>th</sup> 2021 but no suggestion of nesting on the Reserve.

**Confirmed breeding** is shown below as **bold and underlined** with possible/probable breeding as underlined only.

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75



**Merlin** *Falco columbarius*  
Scarce winter visitor. **RED-LISTED**

CUDYLL BACH



Merlin: Peter Haslem

Once a common sight on the Reserve, there were 3 (male and two females) in Nov 1979 and two together on Jan 31<sup>st</sup> 1982, Feb 13<sup>th</sup> 1984 (male and female), Nov 1984, Feb 14<sup>th</sup> 2010 and Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> 2022. On Mar 6<sup>th</sup> 1981, the classic "following-on" of two hen harriers by a merlin, hoping to catch any birds they disturbed, was witnessed. 1985-87 were good years with 50-60 records and aerial chases of larks, pipits, Wheatear, Starling and even a large bat. On one occasion, a Starling took refuge under a parked car and the Merlin leapt onto the windscreen to see if it was inside. The Merlin gave up, but the Starling was so terrified that it stayed under the car for another 20 minutes until the car drove off. On Oct 4<sup>th</sup> 1988, a Meadow Pipit took refuge on the ground close to the West Hide doorway after an aerial chase; too terrified or exhausted to fly, the pipit walked away into the grass when approached. 1989 was best year ever with 69 records, which included a rather tame male with a blue-green leg ring on Sep 19<sup>th</sup>, but we were down to 18 records by 1991. The relatively-large number of 2009 records (34) are attributable to a young bird that took up residence on the Reserve for several weeks. There was a male and female together on Feb 14<sup>th</sup> 2010, but only one record in both 2011 and 2014, which shows how close the Reserve was to getting to a year without Merlins. Fortunately, there were 6 Merlin records in the first 3 months of 2015 alone. On Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016, 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 its young. On Feb 15<sup>th</sup> 2017, one tried to take a Twite from the ringing trap on the fly ash lagoon and another killed a Dunlin on Nov 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017.

**Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

HEBOG YR EHEDYDD

Uncommon summer visitor.

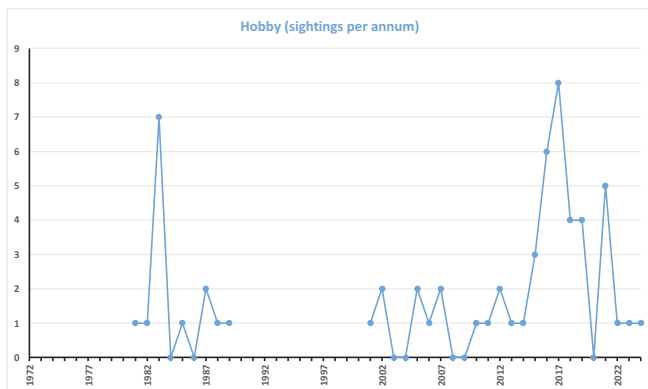


Hobby (not CQNR): Glenn Morris

This species has been spreading north and west in the UK during the past 20 years, but the first Reserve records were as early as Aug 11<sup>th</sup> 1981 and Aug 22<sup>nd</sup> 1982. There were a remarkable 7 records between July 28<sup>th</sup> and Sep 19<sup>th</sup> 1983, followed by singles on Oct 1<sup>st</sup> 1985, Aug 13<sup>th</sup> and Sep 10<sup>th</sup> 1987 and May 1988. One at Flint Point on Sep 26<sup>th</sup> 2001. Two records in 2002: May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 24<sup>th</sup>. More singles on June 24<sup>th</sup> 2003, Sep 26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> 2005, Aug 14<sup>th</sup> 2006, Sep 14<sup>th</sup> 2007 and Sep 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010.

There were two records in 2013, one chasing Swifts over the grazing fields on May 13<sup>th</sup> and another flying across Oakenholt Marsh on Oct 16<sup>th</sup>. One bird sat on the West Hide fence for 30 min. on Aug 19<sup>th</sup>

2014 and there were 3 records in 2015 (Jun and Sep). One was seen following a Marsh Harrier near



the West Hide on Aug 8<sup>th</sup> 2016 and two were seen together over the Marsh on Aug 20<sup>th</sup> 2016, one of them eating a bird in flight.

In 2017, one was perched on the fence outside West Hide on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, one was catching dragonflies on Sep 20<sup>th</sup> and another caught a swallow on Jun 4<sup>th</sup>. For 8 days in Aug/Sep, 2021, juvenile birds were seen hunting the revetment

beyond the bunded pools. Most recently, single records only on Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022 and July 8<sup>th</sup> 2023.

beyond the bunded pools. Most recently, single records only on Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022 and July 8<sup>th</sup> 2023.

**Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

Fairly common winter visitor. Has bred.

HEBOG TRAMOR



Peregrine: Glenn Morris

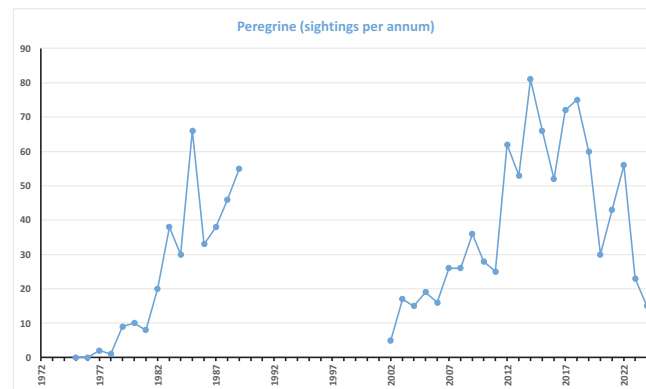
The Peregrine, together with the Buzzard, was once the most frequently seen raptor on the Reserve, but there have been fewer records in recent years. Prey items have included Teal, Stock Dove, Black-headed Gull, Curlew, Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit, Moorhen, Greenshank, Oystercatcher and an unsuccessful attack on a Twite. They perch regularly on pylons near the entrance and at the far end of the fly-ash lagoon. They used to perch on the Power Station near the FSC and on a large bush across the river from the West Hide. Sightings were few in the 1970s but there were two records of 3 birds together in Aug and Nov 1988. In 1989, most records were still Aug-Oct with only 2 records in Apr-Jun. A pair

raised 1 young on a Wetland Meadow pylon in 1996, 1 young on a pylon near the Reserve entrance in 1997, 2 young on a pylon in 1999 and 3 young on a different pylon in 2003. A nestbox (made by Ian Spence) was installed on the Power Station tower near the Field Study Centre in 2004 when eggs were laid the same year, but didn't hatch. It was first used successfully in 2009 (1y fledged), 2010 (2y) and 2012 (1y). Eggs were laid without success in 2011 (disturbance by work on the chimney) and 2013. In 2014, a whole family was found dead with poisoning suspected, though foul play was never proven, and they have not nested since.

**Confirmed breeding** is shown below as **bold** with successful years (fledged young) underlined:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 **14 13 12 11 10 09** 08 07 06 05 **04 03** 02 01 00 **99 98 97 96** 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75

A mid-air male to female exchange of prey was observed on Oct 22<sup>nd</sup> 1987. On Sep 13<sup>th</sup> 2003, a pigeon escaped capture by a Peregrine by flying into the West Hide through the window slots. On Aug 19<sup>th</sup>



2008, a juvenile caught an Oystercatcher, which was then stolen by an adult female.

**Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus*

Rare vagrant.

HEBOG Y GOGLEDD

The first and only record for the Reserve was made by John Raines on Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> 1986. Possibly the same bird seen in Devon and Lundy April 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> 1986 (*candicans* subspecies), but an escape cannot be ruled out.

**Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor*

Rare passage migrant.

CIGYDD MAWR

Finding this species on the Reserve seems almost unimaginable these days but there were singles on Jan 12<sup>th</sup> 1977, April 18<sup>th</sup> and Oct 15<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> 1982, and on Aug 16<sup>th</sup> 1984. This last bird was watched working its way along the fence posts on the road to the hides.

**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*

Uncommon non-breeding visitor.

SGRECH Y COED

1-3 birds have been recorded almost every year since 2008, usually in autumn, but in the last century there were only records of singles in Nov/Dec 1979 and in 1983/84, plus 2 birds on April 21<sup>st</sup> 1981.

**Magpie** *Pica pica*

Common resident. Has bred.

PIODEN

An unpopular predator on fledglings of other species, the highest counts were 59 during a WeBS count on Mar 16<sup>th</sup> 2014 and 200 on Jan 28<sup>th</sup> 2015. Parents often bring young birds (with short tails) onto the Reserve in summer, but breeding on the Reserve itself was not confirmed until 1989.

**Jackdaw** *Coloeus monedula*  
Common year-round visitor.

JAC-Y-DO

Recorded infrequently all year 1976, especially late summer. In 1981/82, mainly in April-May, max of 38. The highest count in the last century was 80 on April 15<sup>th</sup> 1983, compared with recent counts of 100 in 2012, 145 on Jan 19<sup>th</sup> 2015, 200 in May/Oct 2018 and 180 in 2022, so numbers have likely increased.

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**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

YDFRAN

Fairly common year-round visitor. **RED-LISTED**

Recorded infrequently all year 1976-80. The highest count in the last century was 30 on Nov 7<sup>th</sup> 1980, compared with a record high count of 172 on Dec 1<sup>st</sup> 2017, but this was unusual. In 2021, a new rookery close to the paper mill led to larger numbers feeding on the sheep pasture in late summer, but only 45, and the highest count in 2022 was 48.

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**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*

BRÂN DYDDYN

Common, breeding resident.

The commonest corvid on the Reserve, with current maximum counts of 80-100, an increase since the last century. They often feed on the sandbanks at low tide. Breeding was confirmed on the Nature Trail on Jul 1<sup>st</sup> 1984 and again in 1988. A pair raised 2 young on a pylon in 1999 and breeding was proven by the presence of recently-fledged young on Jul 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016. The average maximum count in the 1980s was about 40 compared with 200 on Jan 28<sup>th</sup> 2015 and 130 in Dec, 2020.

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**Hooded Crow** *Corvus cornix*

BRÂN LWYD

Rare vagrant.



One was seen and photographed for the first time on the Reserve on Apr 28<sup>th</sup> 2017, with another at West Hide on Jun 7<sup>th</sup> 2019.

**Raven** *Corvus corax*

CIGFRAN

Fairly common all-year visitor. Has bred.

First recorded flying along the revetment on Nov 17<sup>th</sup> 1982 mobbed by crows, Ravens have certainly increased since they first nested locally in 1991. Nest sites have included pylons (2 young raised in 1999; occupied nest in 2013), Flint castle (1999-2001) and Power Station buildings (2012). The highest count was 13 in 2005, but there was also a count of 11 on Aug 8<sup>th</sup> 2012. A clear increase since the 1980s, but no nesting recorded in the last 10 years.

Years when seen in **bold** and nesting years underlined.

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09** 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 **01 00 99** 98 97 **96** 95 94 93 **92**  
**91 90 89** 88 87 86 85 **84 83 82** 81 80 79 78 77 76

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**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater*

TITW PENDDU

Uncommon winter visitor.

An uncommon winter visitor now, though the very first Reserve record was in summer, on June 6<sup>th</sup> 1977. Nearly all the records are from conifers in the Rockcliffe woodland.

Years when seen in **bold**:

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92**  
**91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

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**Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris*

TITW'R WERN

Rare visitor. **RED-LISTED**

The first and only record for the Reserve was an adult on the edge of the Rockcliffe woodland on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011.

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**Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus*

TITW TOMOS LAS

Common breeding resident.

This species is now the main occupant of nestboxes erected around the Reserve by Society members and is a very common breeding bird. Not satisfied with nestbox provision, in 2013, one pair nested in a 5-litre plastic bottle attached to E-on equipment near the Reserve entrance. During the 1970s, it was seen mainly in winter and breeding was not proven until 1981 when 2 pairs raised young. The high count of 16 birds on Nov 18<sup>th</sup> 1988 and recent counts of 13 on Sep 23<sup>rd</sup> 2012 and July 7<sup>th</sup> 2013 and 14 on Nov 9<sup>th</sup> 2014 suggests that numbers are now fairly stable.

**Great Tit** *Parus major*  
Common breeding resident.

TITW MAWR

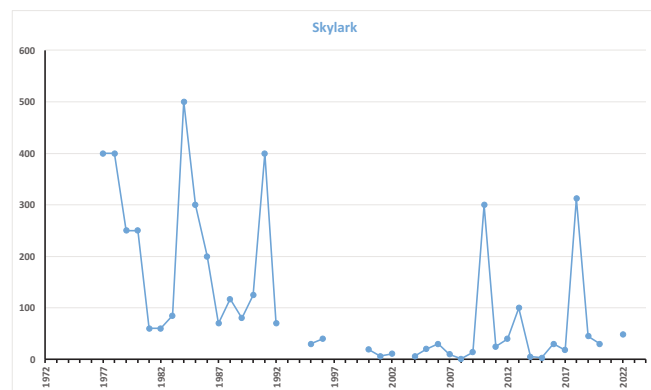
Breeding was first proven in 1981 when a pair were seen with young and it was not regarded as a common species until the mid-1980s, when planted trees were beginning to mature. The highest count was of 20 birds on Mar 16<sup>th</sup> 2014 though 6-9 birds is a more typical maximum in recent years.

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*  
Rare breeding resident and common winter visitor.

EHEDYDD

There has been a massive decline in breeding numbers of this species on the Reserve, estimated at 10-30 pairs in the mid 1980s, down to 7 breeding pairs by 1999. The last singing male record on Mar 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> 2017 was actually across the river on the revetment; the last on the Reserve was on Mar 19<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Confirmed breeding** years are **bold and underlined** below, with singing male records underlined only.  
24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 **06 05 04 03** 02 01 **00 99 98 97** 96 95 94 93 92  
91 90 89 88 **87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80** 79 78 77 76



In 1997, Skylarks started nesting on the new mitigation area of Wetland Meadow and Fly-ash Lagoon, as they did again in 1998, so that by 1999 the Reserve had 7+ nesting pairs altogether. In 2003, it was thought likely that Skylark still nested on both grazing fields, as well as on the new Wetland Meadow. Three singing Skylarks were present near the fly-ash lagoon and on the west

grazing field in 2004 and in 2005, an estimated 8 pairs of Skylark were on the grazing fields plus mitigation area (Wetland Meadow/Fly-ash Lagoon), though presence of up to 10 Magpies may have affected breeding success. Overgrazing of all the fields in 2005 (which necessitated feeding livestock with turnips in winter) could have affected skylark nesting. A new tenant farmer took over the grazing in 2004 and both the two grazing fields and the new Wetland Meadow were cut for hay in Sep 2005. The last confirmed breeding was on Nov 6<sup>th</sup> 2006 when a Skylark was seen feeding 2 chicks on a nest at this very late date. It remains a very common breeding bird on RSPB marshes across the river.

There is also evidence in logbook records of a decline in winter Skylark numbers using the Reserve. The average maximum count during 1976-2000 was 191 (range = 30 to 500) compared with 51 (range = 3 to 312) during 2001-2023, a reduction of 70%. Even so, there is no doubt that significant numbers still winter on the Dee marshes, since 312 were counted on Jan 3<sup>rd</sup> 2018 flying from the English side of the estuary in small flocks during the hour before a 9.93m high tide in strong westerly winds. The highest count of 500 was in Nov 1984.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*  
Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.

GWENNOL Y GLENNYDD

Although hirundines have not been counted systematically in all years, there is no evidence for any change in numbers. The highest count was of 90 on April 17<sup>th</sup> 1980 but there was also a recent count of 50 on Aug 16<sup>th</sup> 2009. The average maximum for the 1980s was 27 compared with 36 in the last 10 years. They are usually seen during Apr-Aug over the fly-ash lagoon and they still nest at Flint Point.

**Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*  
Common passage migrant and summer visitor.

GWENNOL

Apart from an extraordinary estimate of 2,000 birds in Aug 2009, there are several high counts of 100 birds and no evidence of any change over the years. It was described as a "breeding visitor" during 1976-78 and a bird was seen feeding 4 young on a barbed wire fence on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1985 but there are no obvious nesting sites on the Reserve, other than the Power Station. Usually seen Apr-Sep, but there are a few records of early arrivals in March.

**House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*  
Common passage migrant and summer visitor.

GWENNOL Y BONDO

The highest counts for this species were 240 on Aug 10<sup>th</sup> 1988 and 250 on Aug 25<sup>th</sup> 2014 but numbers are typically lower than for Swallows, though higher numbers are recorded in nearby urban areas (e.g. Kelsterton Road). Mid-April is a typical arrival time and they can be seen until mid-September. Although there are no buildings for nesting on the Reserve itself, they can often be seen collecting mud on the Reserve to build nests nearby.

**Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti*  
Scarce non-breeding visitor.

TELOR CETTI

A recent addition to the reserve list and a potential future resident. First heard near the Fly-ash Lagoon on Sep 24<sup>th</sup> 2020. Present there in 2021 from Sep 9<sup>th</sup> to Oct 31<sup>st</sup>, in 2022 from Apr 6<sup>th</sup> until Dec 11<sup>th</sup> and in 2023 between Sep 9<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> but there were no records in 2024. They are usually found in dense scrub, often close to water and reedbeds.

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus*  
Fairly common breeding resident.

TITW GYNFFONHIR

Now an annual visitor in winter flocks of variable numbers, there were high counts of 24 on Sep 23<sup>rd</sup> 2012, 25 in 2004 and 32 in Nov 2018. Outside the breeding season, this species famously forms large flocks, which are often found along the Reserve hedgerows. Flocks of 10-13 birds were recorded in the 1980s, but numbers are too variable to reveal any long-term trends. Nesting is hard to confirm, but numerous spring/early summer records suggest it has occurred.

**Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus*  
*Very scarce vagrant.*

TELOR AELFELYN

The only record was during a visible migration study by Dave Winnard, a bird was "picked up on call from the barrier on Oct 29<sup>th</sup> 2018 and then seen well in a small willow. Still present early on Oct 30<sup>th</sup> 2018 near entrance, calling and seen well in flight. Bird not heard or seen after 08:30am."

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**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*  
*Fairly-common passage migrant. RED-LISTED*

TELOR HELYG

An annual visitor on passage. Although it has been heard singing as late as mid-June, there is no evidence of breeding, the Reserve habitats being unsuitable. It usually occurs mid-April to mid-May and again in July/August. The maximum count was 8 birds on April 27<sup>th</sup> 1983.

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**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*

SIFF-SIAFF

*Common passage migrant, fairly common breeding summer visitor and scarce winter visitor.*

Breeding was first proven on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012 when an adult was seen feeding a young bird on the Power Station wall and again when fledged young were seen on both Jul 7<sup>th</sup> 2013 and Jul 11<sup>th</sup> 2014. Records in the 1980s and up to 2009 clearly suggest that Chiffchaffs occurred annually on passage only; although "common" species are under-recorded on the Reserve, this is unlikely to account for the lack of summer records. The highest count of 22 singing males was on Mar 25<sup>th</sup> 2023. Overwintering birds were seen on Dec 12<sup>th</sup> 1976, during Dec 13<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> 1982 and in the 1987/88 winter (Nov 20<sup>th</sup> - Feb 17<sup>th</sup>), again in the 1988/89 winter (Oct 1<sup>st</sup> - Nov 26<sup>th</sup>) and on Nov 24<sup>th</sup> 2016.

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**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

TELOR HESG

*Uncommon passage migrant and recent breeding summer visitor.*

The first record was on May 24<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> 1981 on the Nature Trail. A pair may have nested on the Nature Trail in 1982 when a male sang from late May and a pair was seen in June and July, although successful breeding was not confirmed. Spring records of singing males on the Nature Trail continued until at least 1989.

In 2012, the focus switched to the fly-ash lagoon, when between May 3<sup>rd</sup> and Jun 23<sup>rd</sup> there were 2 records of singles and one record of a pair, often in the reeds. In 2013, a singing male was in the Wetland Meadow hedgerow from May 19<sup>th</sup> to June 10<sup>th</sup> and two birds were seen twice in this period. Records of 1-2 birds, including singing males, around the fly-ash lagoon continued annually until the first confirmation of breeding on Jun 20<sup>th</sup> 2023 when an adult was seen with 2 young. A male was present May-Aug 2024 but breeding not confirmed.

Years when seen in **bold** and nesting year underlined.

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

TELOR CYRS

*Uncommon passage migrant and breeding summer visitor.*

A newcomer to the Reserve, it was first recorded on Sep 9<sup>th</sup> 2009. This is clearly linked to the expansion of reedbeds on the Fly-ash Lagoon. A pair was resident in the lagoon reedbeds in 2012 from June 4<sup>th</sup> onwards and 2 birds described as juveniles were seen on July 30<sup>th</sup>. The reeds close to the West Hide which housed the warblers were moved to the back of the lagoon during conservation work in 2012. A pair with a singing male was present in reeds of the fly ash lagoon from May 12<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> 2017 and breeding was confirmed by fledged young in 2018, 2019 and 2021. Summer presence but no breeding evidence was recorded in 2022 and in 2023, the year that Sedge Warbler breeding was confirmed, possibly a reflection of competition between the two species [Territorial Exclusion of *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* by *A. scirpaceus* in Reedbeds, Svenson SE *Oikos* 30 (1978) 467]. In summer 2025, a singing male was resident in the new reedbeds near the Field Study Centre.

Years when seen in **bold** and nesting years underlined.

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

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**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia*

TROELLWR BACH

*Rare passage migrant. RED-LISTED*

There are only three records; firstly in 1976 (no details, suggesting it was not a surprising record), then a bird flushed from grass on the Nature Trail on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1979 and a bird seen once and heard once on July 19<sup>th</sup> 1980. There were no further for 40 years until one was heard reeling near the bunded pool in late summer 2025.

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**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*

TELOR PENDDU

*Common passage migrant and summer visitor and scarce winter visitor.*

This species appears to be more common in this century than in the last. Breeding was confirmed for the first time in 2012 when a family party with 2 young was seen on July 8<sup>th</sup> in the Rockcliffe woodland. Breeding was proven again in 2014, with records of family parties on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> and in 2015, a pair with 2 young being seen on Aug 7<sup>th</sup>. It is unclear if the absence of any later nesting records is related to the flattening of small trees below the power lines around this time. Earlier records were mainly of passage and wintering birds, and were surprisingly uncommon for a bird which is so easily detected when singing. The highest count was 12 on Aug 15<sup>th</sup> 2014.

The first winter record was of a pair on Dec 4<sup>th</sup> 1976 followed by males on Dec 23<sup>rd</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> 1983 and Dec 30<sup>th</sup> 2006. A wintering female was seen in the bunded pool area on Dec 21<sup>st</sup> 2017. A very early record on Mar 25<sup>th</sup> 2012, may also have been an overwintering bird.

Years when seen in **bold** and nesting years underlined.

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*  
*Scarce passage migrant.*

TELOR YR ARDD

Habitats on the Reserve are rather marginal for this species and there is no proof of breeding, although there is a midsummer record of 2 singing males on July 4<sup>th</sup> 2011. There have been only 3 other records: a single on a Nature Trail fence on Sep 21<sup>st</sup> 1988 and singing males on May 7<sup>th</sup> 1989 and April 19<sup>th</sup> 2011. 3 birds in the bushes around the bunded pool on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015 was the greatest number recorded on the Reserve. There were further singles on Sep 28<sup>th</sup> 2017 and July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 **19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11** 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92  
91 90 **89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Curruca curruca*

LLWYDFRON FACH

*Fairly common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.*

Most earlier records were from the Nature Trail, which was gradually lost to National Grid construction during 2007-2017. Many recent spring records were from a hawthorn hedgerow below the power lines near the Reserve entrance, but this was removed by National Grid in September 2024. Singing males are currently recorded almost every year in May, usually in thick hedgerows, such as those near the Reserve entrance, but breeding was confirmed only in 1988 (although this species can be very secretive when nesting). That year, a male arrived on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and a family party with 2-4 young was first seen on June 13<sup>th</sup> (records continued until Sep 7<sup>th</sup>). Breeding was confirmed again in 2019 when an adult was seen feeding young out of the nest on June 10<sup>th</sup> and 3 singing males had been heard earlier (at Rockcliffe, bunded pool and Wetland Meadow Trail).

Years when seen in **bold**:

**24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92**  
91 90 **89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

**Whitethroat** *Curruca communis*

LLWYDFRON

*Common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant. RED-LISTED*

Whitethroats appear to have nested annually, on the Nature Trail and in hedgerows elsewhere, throughout 1976-1989 (up to 4 pairs). They appear to have disappeared as a breeding bird during the construction of the new Power Station in the 1990s and may not have bred again until 1999 (2 pairs). In 2015, 6 on Jun 21<sup>st</sup> included newly-fledged young and it is likely that 2-3 pairs nested. Since then breeding success has not been confirmed, possibly because the up to 4 singing males holding territory each year have been taken for granted.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 **19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92**  
91 90 **89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

**Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla*  
*Rare winter visitor.*

DRYW PENFFLAMGOCH

Only one record on Feb 20<sup>th</sup> 2004.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*

DRYW EURBEN

*Uncommon winter visitor. RED-LISTED*

This species is seen regularly outside the breeding season, though not every year, and is often associated with conifers. The highest count of 10 birds was from the Nature Trail on Sep 28<sup>th</sup> 1980. Recent records have been of 1-3 birds only in the Rockcliffe woodland.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 **19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92**  
91 90 **89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

DRYW

*Common breeding resident.*

Breeding was first proven with young birds seen in Aug 1984, but Wrens undoubtedly nest every year in good numbers. An adult was seen carrying food to the nest on Jul 27<sup>th</sup> 2017. The highest counts were of 7 birds on Nov 20<sup>th</sup> 1983 and 6 on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012.

**Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*

DELOR CNAU

*Scarce non-breeding visitor.*

Singles have been recorded on May 6<sup>th</sup> 1977 and Oct 1<sup>st</sup> 1983 in the last century and, in the present century, in 2010, on June 26<sup>th</sup> and Oct 4<sup>th</sup> 2012, on Jun 11<sup>th</sup> 2015 and on Oct 14<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> 2021, using the Dee Hide bird feeders. They are usually associated with larger mature trees.

**Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris*

DRINGWR BACH

*Scarce winter visitor.*

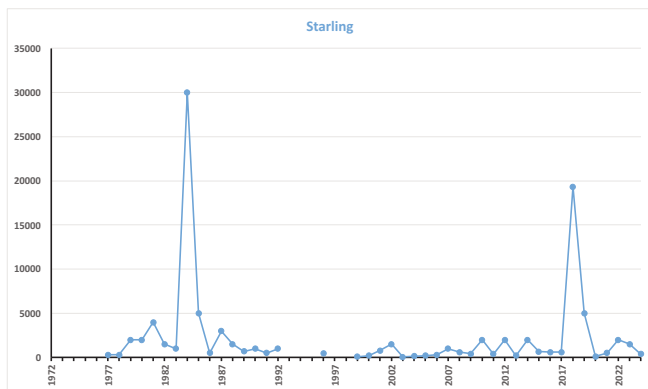
Singles recorded only 5 times last century: in winter 1977 and 1978, on Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> 1983, Nov 24<sup>th</sup> and Dec 8<sup>th</sup> 1989. In the present century, there were records on Jan 16<sup>th</sup> and Nov 10<sup>th</sup> 2014, at Rockcliffe in 2015 and near the Field Study Centre in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

DRUDWEN

*Common resident and winter visitor. RED-LISTED*

Winter visitor 1976 and 300 in late summer 1977-80. 4,000 in Oct 1981 and 1,500 in July 1982. 20-



30,000 on Oct 28<sup>th</sup> 1984, but down to 700 by 1989 (Nov 12<sup>th</sup>) and 300 in Sep/Nov 2009. There was a maximum count of 20,000-30,000 over the revetment on Oct 28<sup>th</sup> 1984 though only a few thousand landed on the Reserve itself. A flock of 5,000 on the evening of Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 1986 was over-flying to roosts across the river. Large post-breeding flocks are still seen in daytime occasionally, such as the 2,000 birds on

July 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 2012 and on Sep 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014. One evening in Nov 2018, there was a count of 19,321 Starlings coming to roost in the Fly-ash Lagoon reedbed, but such careful roost counts have not been repeated. Although there is no proof of breeding recorded, they may have nested on Power Station buildings.

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*

BRONFRAITH

*Fairly common breeding resident and winter visitor.*

An adult was carrying food in June 1984, and another, on Aug 5<sup>th</sup> 1985, may have been raising a second brood. There were 2-3 singing males at this time, so there may have been some decline. A persistent singing male was heard in 2012 but not in 2009 or 2013/14. The Reserve often has a small wintering flock of up to 10 birds (e.g. Dec 19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> 1986) in the Rockcliffe woodland. There were several counts of up to 8 birds in late Sep/ early Oct 2013. The highest count of 17 birds was on Dec 12<sup>th</sup> 2017. A bird carrying food to nest in 2019 was the first recent breeding confirmation and one was seen feeding young in 2021.

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*

BRYCH COED

*Fairly common resident and winter visitor.*

Breeding on or near the Reserve has been confirmed only by family parties and has hardly changed over the years. Birds have been seen feeding young nearly every year since 2018. Flocks larger than family parties are unusual, but there were 18 on Aug 14<sup>th</sup> 1999, and single flocks of 20 in 2000 and 21 on Aug 10<sup>th</sup> 2014.

**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*

COCH DAN ADAIN

*Fairly common winter visitor.*

This winter visitor feeds on hawthorn berries in early winter, but is also on the ground in early spring. The highest count was a mobile flock of 500 in Dec 1984, but the highest recent counts were a mere 90 on Nov 11<sup>th</sup> 2017 and in Nov 2019.

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

MWYALCHEN

*Common breeding resident and winter visitor.*

A daily sight all year, often with an influx of extra birds (mainly males) in autumn and winter. The highest count was 64 in Dec 2020, followed by 25 on both Jan 11<sup>th</sup> 2013 and Feb 16<sup>th</sup> 2014. No evidence of any change in abundance and several pairs nest annually.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*

SOCAN EIRA

*Fairly common winter visitor.*

Similar behaviour to Redwing, though slightly less frequent. The highest counts were 160 on Jan 25<sup>th</sup> 1984 and 300 on Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> 1987.

**Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus*

MWYALCHEN Y MYNYDD

*Very scarce passage migrant and rare winter visitor. RED-LISTED*



Ring Ouzel and Blackbird: Dave Winnard

One was recorded on the track behind the west grazing field on March 26<sup>th</sup> 2006. The second Reserve record was on Mar 11<sup>th</sup> 2017 and another was photographed on the Fly-ash lagoon on Mar 29<sup>th</sup> 2017. A male was near the Field Study Centre with a large fall of Blackbirds on Dec 16<sup>th</sup> 2019.

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*

GWYBEDOG MANNOG

*Scarce passage migrant. Once bred. RED-LISTED*

This species was common, and almost certainly nested, in the Rockcliffe Hall area from 1977-1979, since flocks of 5-6 birds were frequently recorded in July/August (down to 2 infrequent birds in 1980). Breeding was first proven conclusively, however, near the old Power Station entrance, where two adults were seen feeding a juvenile on Aug 13<sup>th</sup> 1987. Sadly, it was not recorded again until it made a brief return to Rockcliffe on May 18<sup>th</sup> 2013, and to the Field Study Centre on Aug 31<sup>st</sup> 2014. There were more recent singles on Aug 31<sup>st</sup> 2017 and May 15<sup>th</sup> 2022.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 **22** 21 20 19 18 **17** 16 15 **14 13** 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 **87** 86 85 84 83 82 81 **80 79 78 77** 76 75

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*  
Common breeding resident.

ROBIN GOCH

Breeding is easier to confirm for this species than for Dunnock because juveniles are so distinctive. Thus, confirmation of breeding was recorded in 2010, 2012 and 2013, but they certainly nest every year. Historically, the species has been taken for granted and there are no counts from earlier years. There was a high count of 14 birds on Mar 16<sup>th</sup> 2014.

**Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*  
Rare passage migrant.

GWYBEDOG BRITH

The only record was one found in trees along the railway track on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochrous*  
Rare passage migrant and winter visitor.

TINGOCH DU

Single on Dec 12<sup>th</sup> 1976 and both winters of 77/78 and 78/79 (last seen April 79). Pair on Dec 1<sup>st</sup> 1982. Single on Apr 6<sup>th</sup> 2013. One on revetment 29<sup>th</sup> Sep 2017. In 2018, there were singles on Jan 1<sup>st</sup>, Feb 1<sup>st</sup> and Aug 8<sup>th</sup>.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 **18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92**  
91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 **82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

**Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*  
Uncommon passage migrant.

TINGOCH

Redstart records have become almost annual as the trees along the Wetland Meadow hedgerow have begun to mature. A pair with 2 juveniles was present on July 18<sup>th</sup> 2011 but breeding birds are hard to distinguish from migrants. The best evidence was in 2017, which had a male on Apr 16<sup>th</sup>, a pair on Apr 23<sup>rd</sup> and a male with 2 juvs on Jul 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, but no evidence of the existence of a nest on-site.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 **22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92**  
91 **90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*  
Uncommon passage migrant. Once bred. **RED-LISTED**

CREC YR EITHIN

It seems extraordinary now that 3 pairs of whinchat nested on the Reserve in 1976 and a further attempt was made in 1977. In 1979/80, they were seen on passage only, but 7 summer records in 1981 suggested possible breeding and 15 summer records, plus a female with 1 young in July, confirmed breeding again in 1982. They may have taken temporary advantage of the loss of nesting

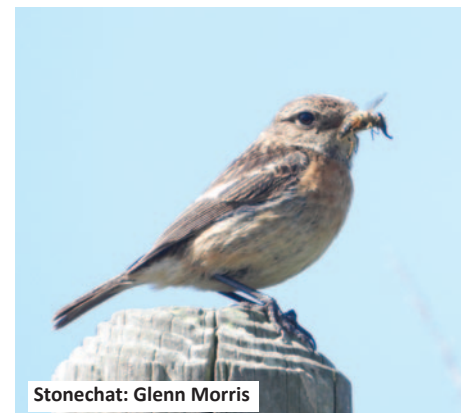
Stonechats, their direct competitors, after 1980. The highest count on passage was of 13 on May 7<sup>th</sup> 1983. In recent years, there have been records almost annually, usually of 1-2 birds and usually on spring passage in early May in the fly ash lagoon area. In 2017, there were 8 records of 1-3 birds during Apr 24-30<sup>th</sup>.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 **22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92**  
91 **90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75 74**

**Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola*  
Breeding resident and winter visitor.

CLOCHDAR Y CERRIG



Stonechat: Glenn Morris

This species was a breeding resident in 1976 (2 pairs), 1977 (3 young raised), 1979 (3 pairs, one raising 4 young) and 1980 (4 pairs, one raising 5 young). Breeding failed in 1981 and was not attempted in 1982. There were winter records only in 1983, 1984 and 1987. Loss of habitat may explain its loss as a breeding species, since it nested along the Nature Trail or close to power station buildings in scrub which no longer exists. For many years, 1-2 birds were seen only occasionally outside the nesting season, but a pair was present from Oct 25<sup>th</sup> to Dec 11<sup>th</sup> 2022 and they since nested again, both on the marsh near the Field Study Centre and near the West Hide. The highest counts were 7 on Mar 10<sup>th</sup> 2018, 8 in 1980 and 10 in 2024.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 **22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92**  
91 90 **89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75 74**

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*  
Fairly common passage migrant and rare breeding visitor.

TINWEN Y GARN



Wheatear: Glenn Morris

This species occurs on passage every year. As the graph below shows, peak numbers are variable, but the 10-year average has remained constant at about 10. The highest count of 35 was on April 20<sup>th</sup> 2013. Single birds late in the season are sometimes the Icelandic subspp. *leucorhoa* (e.g. on May 17-20<sup>th</sup> 2017, May 27<sup>th</sup> 2013 and Nov 8<sup>th</sup> 2008 and May 1<sup>st</sup> 2006). Now seen on passage only, there are several indications that breeding has occurred on or near the Reserve in the past. Thus, 4 young birds were seen in May 1977. In



1987, a pair was present with the male in song until June 11<sup>th</sup> and a juvenile bird was seen in July. In 1988, a juvenile was seen with 1-2 adults between July 20<sup>th</sup> and Aug 14<sup>th</sup>, though these may have been passage birds. A pair nested on the newly-created Wetland Meadow in 1995 and a male was photographed carrying nesting material on the Nature Trail marshes on Apr 28<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus*  
Sporadic and scarce winter visitor.

CYNFFON SIDAN

This species occurs during periodic invasions, when food supplies further north are in short supply. Remarkably, it was not recorded on the Reserve until Dec 29<sup>th</sup> 2004 when a flock of 23 was seen, followed by a single in early Dec 2005. There were further records in 2008 and on Jan 20<sup>th</sup> 2009, when there were 13 on the Reserve. Most recently, a flock of 13 in the Rockcliffe woods on Dec 16<sup>th</sup> 2012, had increased to 23 by Dec 23<sup>rd</sup>. On Dec 26<sup>th</sup> 2023, 8 birds were in a tree close to Middle Hide.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 **23** 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 **12** 11 10 **09** **08** 07 06 05 **04** 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

**Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*

GOLFAN MYNYDD

Rare passage migrant. Once a common winter visitor and has bred. **RED-LISTED**

The decline of the Tree Sparrow on the Reserve has been steep and continuous. 2000 was almost the last year they were seen and was also, ironically, the first year that breeding was proven, the peak count of 6 in June suggesting a single pair. There were summer records in July 1978 and April 1982. The highest counts of 40 birds were in winter: Jan 1983, Oct-Dec, 1985 (when flocks of 20-40 were regular) and again in 1990. This was followed by a complete absence of records for the 2-year period of 1987-88, showing that their appearances on the Reserve were always sporadic. Small flocks were seen annually during 1998-2000, but there were no subsequent records, until 4 were seen moving SE during a visible migration study on Nov 6<sup>th</sup> 2018.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 **18** 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 **00** **99** **98** 97 96 95 94 93 **92** 91 **90** **89** 88 87 **86** **85** **84** **83** **82** **81** **80** **79** **78** **77** **76**

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

ADERYN Y TŌ

Uncommon breeding resident and post-breeding visitor.

For many years, the House Sparrow was an uncommon visitor to the Reserve, though it was sometimes recorded along the old access road behind the houses of Kelsterton road, usually just 1-2 birds. The only really high count of 150 on Aug 18<sup>th</sup> 1982 was in the Power Station gardens that were once near the old entrance. Recently, however, post-breeding flocks have been coming onto the Reserve in July/August and a pair nested in a hedgerow near the new Reserve entrance in 2012. A flock of 15 on Jun 4<sup>th</sup> 2017 included recently-fledged young and breeding was confirmed along the Wetland Meadow hedgerow in 2018.

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*

LLWYD Y GWYRCH

Common breeding resident.

Ironically, this bird is so common that they are rarely counted and there were no records of confirmed breeding (although they do nest every year!), until one was seen carrying food to the nest on July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016 and July 27<sup>th</sup> 2017. The highest count was 9 birds in 1980 and on June 17<sup>th</sup> 2012.

**Western Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava flavissima*

SIGLEN FELEN GORLLEWIN

Uncommon passage migrant. Has bred. **RED-LISTED**

Hard to believe now, but 1-3 pairs once bred annually (1978-84), raising up to 4 young. In 1985, a ringed male displayed but failed to find a mate. The decline reflects a national trend of withdrawal from the western part of its range in the 1980s, but they still nest annually in suitable habitat nearby (RSPB Burton Mere had 5 pairs in 2023). The highest count was 26 on Apr 27<sup>th</sup> 1983 and the graph below shows a continuous decline after this. Most records are now of 1-3 birds near the fly ash lagoon from late April to early June, though autumn passage was once substantial as well (e.g. 20 on Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> 1982). The highest recent count was of 8 in 2007 and the last record was a single on Aug 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021.

Years when seen in **bold** and nesting years underlined

24 23 22 21 20 19 **18** 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 **09** **08** **07** **06** **05** **04** **03** **02** 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 **92** 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

SIGLEN LWYD

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.

This species is recorded almost annually with a maximum count of 4 birds with 23 Western Yellow Wagtails on May 14<sup>th</sup> 1983. One or two birds wintered on the Rockcliffe woodland path from Sep 28<sup>th</sup>-Nov 28<sup>th</sup> 2012. Passage numbers are very variable while numbers in winter are quite low. A bird ringed at Middleton Reserve, Heysham was present during Oct 6<sup>th</sup> to Nov 19<sup>th</sup> 2014 and another ringed bird was present from Aug 19<sup>th</sup> to Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 2016. Since 2016, all records have come from the Fly-ash lagoon or the Papermill stream.

**Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba yarrellii*  
Common breeding resident and passage migrant.

SIGLEN FRAITH

The highest count was of 110 birds in 1999, a year when 3 pairs also bred. A more recent high count was 60 in Jan 2022. A pair nested on the fly ash lagoon, where up 3-5 fledged young were seen with 2 adults during Jun 3<sup>rd</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> 2017. It has nested in every year recently, most records from the fly ash lagoon area, but potentially on Power station buildings as well.

The years with nesting evidence are shown in underlined below.  
24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba alba*  
Fairly common passage migrant.

SIGLEN WEN

The highest count on spring passage was of 60 on May 7<sup>th</sup> 1979. Although this species is usually seen from mid-April to mid-May, there was an unusually high autumn count of 40 birds on Sep 22<sup>nd</sup> 2013. Numbers fluctuate wildly from year to year and in some years, like 2017 and 2023, there were no specific records at all for this subsp.

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi*  
Rare vagrant.

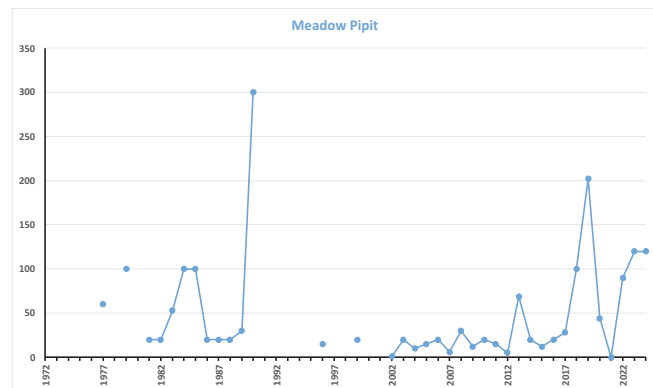
CORHEDYDD RICHARD

This Siberian migrant was present during Nov 23<sup>rd</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> 1999. The record was accepted by BBRC. Two were present on Nov 27<sup>th</sup> 1999 (eBird).

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*  
Common passage migrant and winter visitor. Has bred. **RED-LISTED**

CORHEDYDD Y WAUN

This species has an interesting history. Initially occurring as a passage migrant, it was first recorded performing a song flight on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1983. Breeding was confirmed for the first and only time in 1985,



though song flights were seen in 1986, 1988, 1989 and during the 1990s. Song flights were still seen over the marsh near the helipad in 2012 and 2013, but have not been recorded since. Most records are of passage birds in Apr or Sep. A recent count of 69 birds on Mar 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 was during a period of late snow cover, but the highest count was 202 in April 2019.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*  
Rare passage migrant. **RED-LISTED**

CORHEDYDD Y COED

A bird present in the banded pool willow screen during April 23<sup>rd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> 1983 was the first Reserve record. Two birds were seen in 2010 and one was heard flying over on Apr 30<sup>th</sup> 2019.

**Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*  
Very scarce winter visitor.

CORHEDYDD Y DWR

Records in the 1999/2000 winter were of 2 birds; otherwise, single birds were recorded twice in Nov/Dec 1977 and 1978, on Sep 17<sup>th</sup> and Dec 17<sup>th</sup> 1988, on Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> 1989 and Feb 15<sup>th</sup> 2010. Further records on Mar 24<sup>th</sup> 2014, Nov 29<sup>th</sup> 2015 and Dec 12<sup>th</sup> 2016 at West Hide. In 2018, there were 4 records of 1-2 on banded pool ridge during flooding at high tides in Jan, Feb and Mar. Another in the same place on Dec 9<sup>th</sup> 2019 and the most recent on Dec 22<sup>nd</sup> 2022.

Years when seen in **bold**:  
24 **23** **22** **21** **20** **19** **18** **17** **16** **15** **14** **13** **12** **11** **10** 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 **00** **99** 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 **89** **88** **87** **86** **85** **84** **83** **82** **81** **80** **79** **78** **77** **76** **75**

**Rock Pipit** *Anthus petrosus*  
Fairly common winter visitor.

CORHEDYDD Y GRAIG



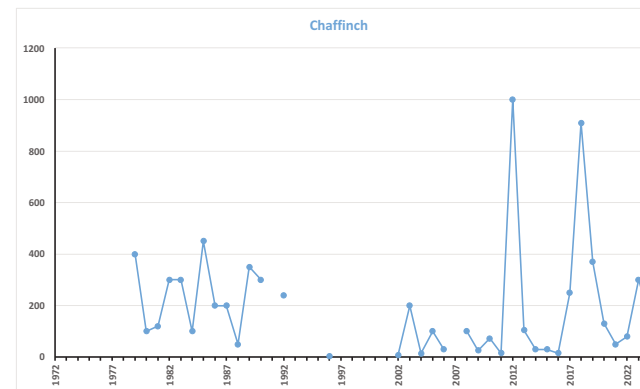
Rock Pipit: Peter Haslem

This species is recorded regularly on and around the West Hide during high tides. There have been 4 high counts of 6-7 birds, but 1-3 is more typical, usually during Nov-Feb.

Years when seen in **bold**:  
24 **23** **22** **21** **20** **19** **18** **17** **16** **15** **14** **13** **12** **11** **10** **09** 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 **00** **99** 98 97 96 95 94 93 **92** **91** **90** **89** **88** **87** **86** **85** **84** **83** **82** **81** **80** **79** **78** **77** **76** **75**

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*  
Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

JI-BINC



Throughout the 1980s, winter flocks consistently numbered 100-400 birds, but in the present century, 10-100 has been more usual. On Dec 5<sup>th</sup> 2012 the highest ever count of 1,000 birds was recorded (at a time when large finch flocks were widely reported in North Wales) and this accounts for the apparent recovery in the graph below. Breeding was

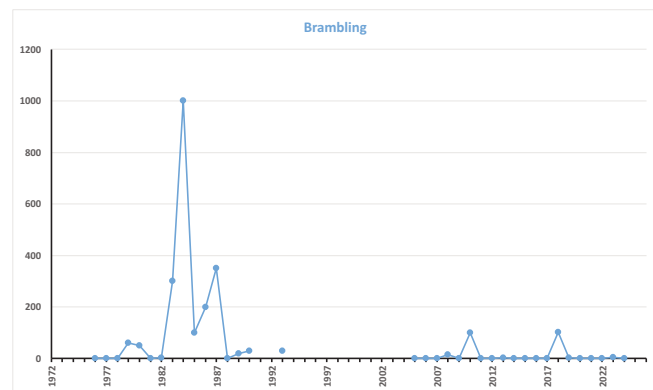
first confirmed in the Rockcliffe woodland only in 1987 when a male was seen carrying food, but it may have occurred more often. A flock of 250 was found on the Nature Trail on Nov 18<sup>th</sup> 2017. 909 were counted during a visible migration study in Nov 2018, there were 178 around the helipad in Dec 2018 and 300 on the marsh in Nov 2023.

**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*

PINC Y MYNYDD

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

Winter influxes of Bramblings into the UK vary considerably from year-to-year. 1983/84, 1985/86 and 1986/87 were good winters at CQNR, but the 1982/83 and 1984/85 winters had no Bramblings at all. The highest count of 1,000 birds was made near the fly ash lagoon on Jan 25<sup>th</sup> 1984 (also 300 in 1983 and 350 in 1987). The highest recent count was 100 birds in 2010, most subsequent counts being of 1-5 birds. Most records are Dec-Feb, but there was a very late record of a female on May 18<sup>th</sup> 2013. Visible migration counts carried out by Dave Winnard in 2018 recorded Brambling as follows: 36 on Oct 29<sup>th</sup>, 6 on Oct 30<sup>th</sup>, 31 on Nov 5<sup>th</sup>, 102 on Nov 6<sup>th</sup> 102 and 8 on Nov 9<sup>th</sup>.



The highest count of 1,000 birds was made near the fly ash lagoon on Jan 25<sup>th</sup> 1984 (also 300 in 1983 and 350 in 1987). The highest recent count was 100 birds in 2010, most subsequent counts being of 1-5 birds. Most records are Dec-Feb, but there was a very late record of a female on May 18<sup>th</sup> 2013. Visible migration counts carried out by Dave Winnard in 2018 recorded Brambling as follows: 36 on Oct 29<sup>th</sup>, 6 on Oct 30<sup>th</sup>, 31 on Nov 5<sup>th</sup>, 102 on Nov 6<sup>th</sup> 102 and 8 on Nov 9<sup>th</sup>.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 **23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

The high numbers in the 1980s could have been related to severe winters in this period (in Wales and/or Northern Europe), but local factors, such as the putting out of seeds by the Society for Wigeon and finches during times of snow cover (only in the 1980s), may also have played a part.

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

COCH Y BERLLAN

Fairly common breeding resident.

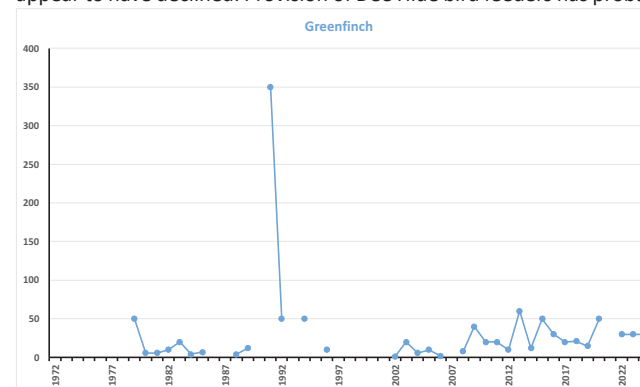
The highest count of 6 on Aug 16<sup>th</sup> 2013 included 3 juveniles and breeding was again confirmed in 2014. Bullfinches have occurred as singles or pairs in the Rockcliffe woodland in every year for which records are available, so successful nesting may have been regular.

**Greenfinch** *Chloris chloris*

LLINOS WERDD

Common breeding resident. **RED-LISTED**

The highest numbers occurred in the early winter of 1991, building up from 50 on Aug 18<sup>th</sup> to 200 by Oct 23<sup>rd</sup> and the massive count of 350 on Nov 13<sup>th</sup>. The highest recent count was 60 on July 28<sup>th</sup> 2013. The graph, although distorted by the 1991 count, shows that numbers vary considerably, but do not appear to have declined. Provision of Dee Hide bird feeders has probably contributed to higher counts



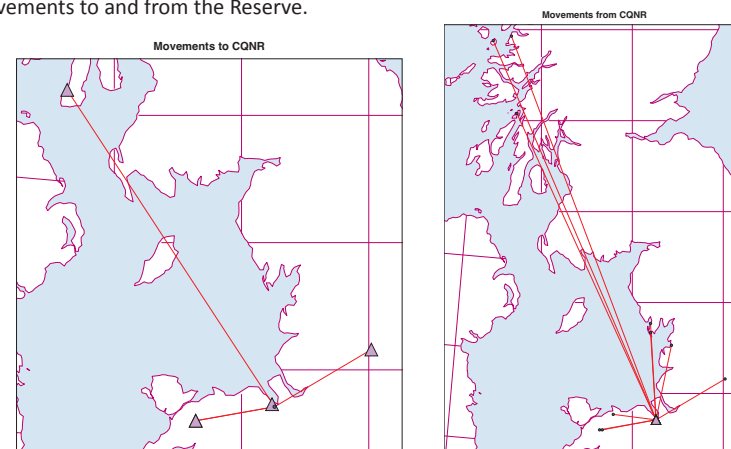
in the past 10-15 years. Dramatic effects of *trichomonosis*, seen in parts of the UK since 2005, are not evident from the records. A pair nesting near the railway line in 1988 was the only confirmed breeding record until it was confirmed again on Jul 11<sup>th</sup> 2014 and on Jun 27<sup>th</sup> 2023 though young birds are often seen in summer (e.g. Jul 28<sup>th</sup> and Aug 9<sup>th</sup> 2014).

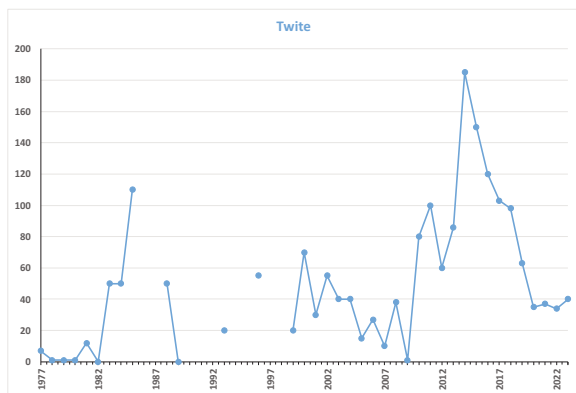
**Twite** *Linaria flavirostris*

LLINOS Y MYNYDD

Common winter visitor.

Twite in winter have become one of the major attractions of the Reserve, with good and reliable views from the West Hide or its approach road. These recent flocks do not habitually mix with Linnets. The highest count of 185 (mostly Twite, some Linnets) was on Dec 6<sup>th</sup> 2014, but flocks of 100 birds are typical of recent years. Six birds in the 2013/14 winter had colour rings which had been put on either close to a Snowdonia nesting site in summer or at Flint or Heysham wintering sites. Scottish birds have also been present, since two "recoveries" in the 2014/15 winter had been ringed in SW Kintyre. A very successful programme of observation and ringing in support of the Welsh Twite Recovery Project took place on the Reserve between 2014 and 2020 with 213 newly ringed by Ian Spence. The maps show movements to and from the Reserve.

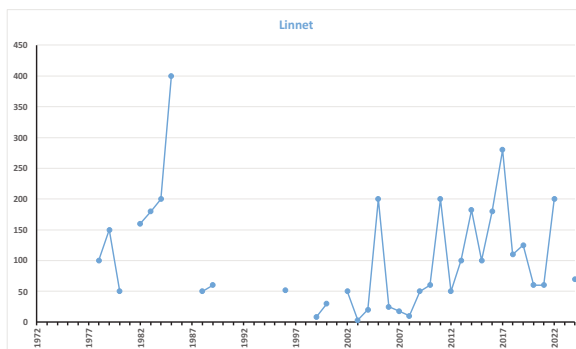




**Linnet** *Linaria cannabina*

Common breeding resident and winter visitor. **RED-LISTED**

LLINOS



The largest winter flock was of 400 birds on Nov 11<sup>th</sup> 1985 followed by 280 on Sep 18<sup>th</sup> 2017. Breeding (**bold and underlined** below), often confirmed by adults seen feeding young, was first recorded in 1982 and more regularly in recent years, including 2 pairs in 2023.

24 **23 22 21** 20 19 18 **17 16 15 14** 13  
**12** 11 10 **09** 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01  
 00 **99** 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89  
 88 **87** 86 **85** 84 83 **82** 81 80 79 78 77  
 76

**Redpoll** *Acanthis cabaret*

Uncommon winter visitor.

LLINOS BENGGOCH FECHAN

The first record was a bird seen on the Nature Trail on April 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 1982. The highest count was a flock of 25 seen on Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> 2004. In 2012, there were several records, beginning with 4 near the banded pool hides on Jan 15<sup>th</sup> and followed by a single in the same area on Mar 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, plus another near the Reserve entrance on Oct 29<sup>th</sup>. Two further birds were seen on Apr 20<sup>th</sup> 2013. The most recent records were 13 near the Reserve entrance on Dec 21<sup>st</sup> 2016 and 15 in the same place on Dec 20<sup>th</sup> 2017.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 **17 16 15 14 13 12** 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 **04** 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92  
 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 **82** 81 80 79 78 77 76 75



Siskin and Redpoll (not CQNR): Glenn Morris

**Siskin** *Spinus spinus*  
 Scarce passage migrant.

PILA GWYRDD

These were first recorded when a flock of 12 birds were seen on Oct 9<sup>th</sup> 1976. There were then 2 on July 31<sup>st</sup> 1979 but most subsequent records were of single birds from early March to mid-June, until 3 birds were seen in flight on Mar 7<sup>th</sup> 2014 and again on the feeders on Apr 13<sup>th</sup> 2016. The highest count was 21 during a visible migration study on Nov 6<sup>th</sup> 2018.

Years when seen in **bold**

24 23 22 21 20 **19 18 17 16 15 14 13** 12 11 10 **09 08 07** 06 05 **04** 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92  
 91 90 89 **88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79** 78 77 76 75

**Common Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra*

Rare passage migrant.

GYLFINGROES

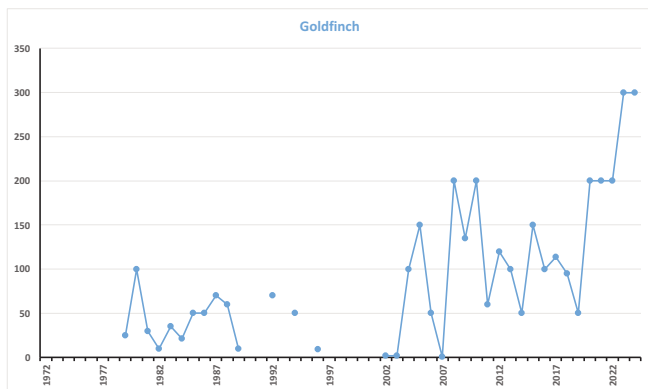
The only record is of a flyover of 3 during a visible migration study by the Reserve entrance gate by Dave Winnard on Nov 6<sup>th</sup> 2018.

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*

Common breeding resident and winter visitor.

NICO

The highest numbers occur in autumn when there are plenty of seed bearing plants in the fields and the highest count was 200 on Open Day (Oct 5<sup>th</sup>) 2013 until 300 were seen on Sep 17<sup>th</sup> 2023. The graph shows a recent increase in numbers, typically 50-100 in the 1980s and now 100-200. Just one



of the many autumn spectacles on the Reserve. The first conclusive evidence of breeding was near the bunded pool in 1985, which had a male in song, a bird carrying nesting material and a sighting of 4 young birds in the willow screen. Breeding was confirmed again in 2021, although frequent summer records suggest it may nest regularly.

**Lapland Bunting** *Calcarius lapponicus*  
Rare winter visitor.

BRAS Y GOGLEDD

Only two records from Oakenholt Marsh: 4 on Nov 2<sup>nd</sup> 1990 and 2 on Jan 27<sup>th</sup> 2012.

**Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis*  
Rare winter visitor.

BRAS YR EIRA

The first record was of 3 males flying over on Jan 19<sup>th</sup> 1982. There was a single in the large Brambling flock on Jan 25<sup>th</sup> 1984. A bird was present in the West Hide car park in 2007 and 2 were seen on the revetment on Dec 26<sup>th</sup> 2012.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 **12** 11 10 09 08 **07** 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 **87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

**Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra*  
No recent records. Once a regular resident and winter visitor.

BRAS YR YD

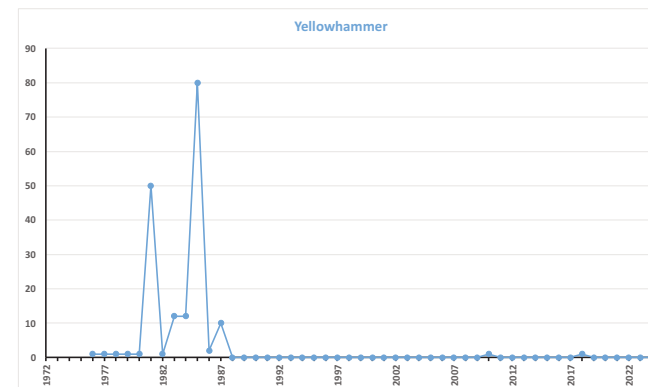
Although there were 2 males singing in 1976 and singles on June 17<sup>th</sup> 1979 and in late April 1983 breeding was never proven. The highest count was 15 in both winter 1976 and on Mar 28<sup>th</sup> 1978. Two birds in Jan 1984 were the last to be recorded, a disastrous decline consistent with the national trend in Wales.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 **84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella*  
Rare winter visitor. **RED-LISTED**

BRAS MELYN



Recorded every winter until 1987, usually flocks of 1-10, but high counts of 50 in Dec 1981 and 40-80 during Jan/Feb 1985 were often feeding on seeds put out along the snow-covered bunded pool road. The only recent records were a single in 2010 and one with Reed Buntings by the helipad on Dec 14<sup>th</sup> 2018.

Years when seen in **bold**:

24 23 22 21 20 19 **18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

**Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*  
Fairly common breeding resident and winter visitor.

BRAS CYRS



Reed Bunting: Mike Pollard

After breeding was first confirmed in 1985 and 1987, it was not confirmed again until July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2023. They benefited from the development of reed beds on the fly-ash lagoon and elsewhere. Between 1980 and 1985, winter flocks of 20-50 birds were recorded as feeding on *spartina* seeds on the saltmarsh, but these had dwindled to 2 or 3 birds by 1989. The appearance and disappearance of these flocks may be linked to vegetation changes on the saltmarsh. The highest count was 50 in winter 1985.

## ESCAPES (birds not, or unlikely to be, of wild origin)

**Snow Goose** *Anser caerulescens*  
*Breeds in arctic Canada.*

GŴYDD YR EIRA

The first record for the Reserve was a white phase bird on Sep 18<sup>th</sup> 1987 followed by 2 on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2004, 3 on Sep 8<sup>th</sup> 2009, 1 on Jun 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019 and a single blue-phase bird in June, 2014. These, and most other Welsh records, are likely to be escaped birds.

**Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus*  
*Breeds in arctic Siberia.*

GŴYDD DALCENWEN FECHAN

Three birds present on Aug 15<sup>th</sup> 2010 and one on Feb 18<sup>th</sup> 2023.

**Ross's Goose** *Anser rossii*  
*Breeds in arctic Canada.*

GŴYDD ROSS

A likely escaped bird seen with Greylags on Oakenholt marsh on Oct 15<sup>th</sup> 2009 and a non-logbook record from [deeestuary.com](http://deeestuary.com) on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2004.

**Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis*  
*Breeds on Siberian tundra.*

GŴYDD FRONGOCH

One present on Oakenholt Marsh on July 14<sup>th</sup> 2005. There were additional records in 1991 and 1997

**Orinoco Goose** *Neochen jubata*  
*Breeds in South America.*

GŴYDD ORINOCO

Recorded several times from Oct 31<sup>st</sup> onwards in 2012 and usually seen with the Canada Goose flock on Oakenholt Marsh or the fly-ash lagoon.

**Bar-headed Goose** *Anser indicus*  
*Breeds in Asia and Siberia.*

GŴYDD BENRHESOG

One was present with the Canada Goose flock during Nov 1995-Jan 1996, and another was present on May 15<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> 2002. In 2013, one was on the fly ash lagoon on Aug 10-11<sup>th</sup> and again on Oct 7<sup>th</sup>; another, or possibly the same bird, was present on Jan 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> 2014. The most recent record was of 2 on Dec 31<sup>st</sup> 2023.

**Emperor Goose** *Anser canagicus*  
*Breeds in arctic Russia and Alaska.*

GŴYDD FRECH

One on Feb 28<sup>th</sup> 2023.

**Black Swan** *Cygnus atratus*  
*Breeds in Australia.*

ALARCH DDU

First recorded in 2001 and then again in 2008 and 2009 (Dec 28<sup>th</sup>). A single bird was seen on Apr 21<sup>st</sup> 22<sup>nd</sup> and Nov 10<sup>th</sup> 2013 and on Mar 31<sup>st</sup> 2014. In 2015, 3 on Burton Marsh were visible from West Hide, as were 2 birds in 2017, but 2 were seen on Oakenholt Marsh in 2018 and 1 in Sep 2019.

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*

HWYADEN GOCH YR EITHEN

*Regular visitor. Probable escapes, though feral populations exist.*

The first reserve record was a single on July 6/7<sup>th</sup> 1980. After a second record in 1990, sightings became almost annual since 2003, with 3 present on Aug 14<sup>th</sup> 2006. Singles every year 2018-2021. Flock of 6 from Nov 24<sup>th</sup> 2022 to Dec 11<sup>th</sup> 2022. Five birds in 2022 were present again on Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023 and 1 returned on May 6<sup>th</sup> 2023. Although they breed in Norfolk in small numbers, with feral populations in Europe, our birds are most likely escapees and have included Common/Ruddy Shelduck hybrids, such as the one present June-Aug 2016 and June-July 2017.

**Cape Shelduck** *Tadorna cana*

HWYADEN FRAITH Y PENRHYN

*Breeds in southern Africa.*

This was first recorded on Jan 22<sup>nd</sup>/ 23<sup>rd</sup> 2012 and several times in Oct/Nov of the same year. Escapee on Oakenholt Aug 24<sup>th</sup> to Sep 28<sup>th</sup> 2021.

**Chiloe Wigeon** *Anas sibilatrix*  
*Argentinian species.*

CHIWELL MAGELAN

The only record was on Sep 2<sup>9th</sup> 1989.

**Reeves's Pheasant** *Syrnaticus reevesii*  
*Native to China.*

FFESANT REEVES

First photographed along the Gardener's compound path (Rockcliffe woodland) on Oct 14<sup>th</sup> 2012. Another was under the bird feeders for several days in 2018.

**Golden Pheasant** *Chrysolophus pictus*  
*Native to China.*

FFESANT EURAID

A single female joined the Pheasants feeding around the bird feeders in 2023.

**Diamond Dove** *Geopelia cuneata*  
*Resident in most of Australia.*

TURTUR FECHAN

The only record of this Australian species was a bird perched on the fence by the fly ash lagoon on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012, when it was almost taken by a Peregrine.

**Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri*  
Feral.

PARACIT TORCHOG

One was heard from West Hide and then seen sitting at the top of a tree along the Papermill stream on Nov 13<sup>th</sup> 2018.

**Lesser Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus minor*  
*Resident in Africa and western India.*

FFLAMINGO BACH

The only record for the Reserve of this African species was a bird present regularly on the bunded pool during Jan 10<sup>th</sup>-Feb 25<sup>th</sup> 1988.

**Chilean Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus chilensis*  
*Resident in South America.*

FFLAMINGO CHILE

A single bird was photographed on Oakenholt Marsh on Nov 28<sup>th</sup> 2014.

**Harris's Hawk** *Parabuteo unicinctus*  
*Escape from North America.*

GWALCH HARRIS

A local falconer's bird with jesses near the fly-ash lagoon on Nov 13<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus*  
*Resident in southern Europe, Africa and Middle East.*

HEBOG LANNER

A falconer's bird was present on Sep 11<sup>th</sup> 1986. The bird was well-known in the area.

#### Unconfirmed Records:

1) **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes*  
*Rare vagrant from North America.*

MELYNGOES BACH

An unconfirmed record of a single bird with a large flock of Redshank on the river edge opposite the Nature Trail on July 7<sup>th</sup> 2004 (Clwyd Monitoring: Flint-Connah's Quay, June-August 2004).

2) **Bonaparte's Gull** *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*  
*Rare vagrant from North America.*

GWYLAN BONAPARTE

One record on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2011, described as "probable" on [deestuary.co.uk](http://deestuary.co.uk).

3) **Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*  
*Rare winter visitor.*

ADERYN Y BWN

This species was recorded on Dec 28<sup>th</sup> 2013 in the NE Wales Bird Report, but there was no record in the Reserve logbooks. May be confusion with a Birdguides record at Cop Hole on the same day.

4) **Willow Tit** *Poecile montanus*  
*Rare visitor. RED-LISTED*

TITW'R HELYG

A bird was reported in the bushes near the helipad on Sep 20<sup>th</sup> 2015 and a description submitted, but no photo or described vocalization that would exclude Marsh Tit.

#### Worth a Mention.

1) **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**

One on Oct 19<sup>th</sup> 1973 was accepted by BBRC, but it was near the present-day Dee bridge, and there is no evidence that it crossed into the CQNR area (next day, it had moved to Shotton Pools).

#### References

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Link; <https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/research-reports/local-regional-national-and-international-importance-wader>

Birch, J.E., 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.



Black-tailed Godwits: Peter Haslem

## A Brief History of Bird Recording on the Reserve.

Thelma Sykes and Joan Davidson produced excellent Annual Reports during 1976-84 and I then produced my first full DNS Bird Report for 1985-1987, followed by annual reports in 1988 and 1989. Although I wrote newsletter reports up to the end of 1990, no Annual Reports appeared again until a 5-year Report was produced by Ron Plummer for 1992-1996, containing maximum counts of wildfowl and waders, but less data on raptors and passerines. Subsequently, no reports were produced for a 12-year period during 1997-2008. The Clwyd Monitoring Group which carried out monthly high and low water counts between September 1992 and November 2008 (Raymond Roberts *et al.*) produced important data on wildfowl and wader numbers, but very little on raptors and passerines. Ray Roberts provided Newsletter Reports on the birds up to June 2009. Andrew Wallbank did an Annual Report for 2009, but neither annual nor newsletter reports appeared during 2010/2011. I took over again as Bird Recorder with a newsletter report in Apr 2013 and produced Annual Reports for 2012 to 2017 when the DNS website made it possible to publish them on-line. By analysis of the DNS hide logbooks which had been preserved from 2002 to 2010, I was able to fill this gap in the first edition of this book in 2014. During 2018-2025, reports have been produced annually by Peter and Sue Haslem.

Thus, although a near-complete history of wildfowl and waders on the Reserve can be put together, there is an unfortunate 12-year gap from 1990 to 2001 in data on raptors, passerines and breeding successes, especially during 1996-98 when no County Reports were published to help fill the gap. The years in boldface below are those for which good documentation is available and was used to produced this book.

DNS Reserve Reports: (Brackets indicate one report covered 1992-96) **25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 (96 95 94 93 92)** 91 90 **89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

DNS Reserve Logbooks: [Brackets = west hide logbooks only. Italics = logbooks were not directly consulted] 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 **11 10 09 08 07 06 05 [04 03 02]** 01 00 99 98 97 (96 95 94 93 92) 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

Clwyd Monitoring Rep: 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 **08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92** 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76

County Bird Reports: (Brackets = no reports available) **25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99** (98 97 96) **95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75**

Deeestuary.com: **25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76**

## A History of Change on the Connah's Quay Nature Reserve, 1975-2025.

The Dee Estuary was scheduled as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1954 and re-notified in 1983 under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It was notified under the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) and under the Ramsar Convention in 1985. The Deeside Naturalist's Society (DNS) was started by the 20 people who attended a public meeting on April 26<sup>th</sup> 1973, the driving force behind it being one Raymond A Roberts, who served as DNS Secretary for over 30 years. The idea for a Connah's Quay Nature Reserve came in 1974 when DNS was awarded a grant, under the UK government Quality of Life Experiment, to build a bird observation hide. In 1975, the manager of the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) Power Station at Connah's Quay (Mr KWF Steward, MBE) invited DNS to site the hide on their land and to assist in the development of a Nature Reserve. In 1978, CEGB and DNS were jointly awarded a Prince of Wales Award for Conservation. Construction of the Field Study Centre was begun shortly afterwards and the centre was opened by the Duke of Edinburgh in June 1983.



**Opening of Field Study Centre 1983 (KS).  
Left, HRH Duke of Edinburgh  
Middle, Keith Steward  
Right, Raymond Roberts  
Rear, Ozzie Davies**

The first Open Day that year attracted 200 visitors to the Reserve. The observation hides have been gradually improved over the years until we now have a double-decker West Hide, three bunded pool Hides and a new, but under-used, Hide overlooking the wetland Meadow. The Society was very active in 1984 opposing plans for a Flint by-pass road and supporting the least-damaging proposal for the new Dee bridge. The threat of a public footpath through the Reserve in 2012, part of the North Wales Coastal Path, was also successfully avoided.

The coal-fired CEGB Power Station closed in 1984. Oakenholt Marsh belonged to CEGB but reverted to the Welsh Water Authority when the Power Station closed. After a period of uncertainty, RSPB bought the Marsh in 1987. The West hide, which originally faced the river, was

extended in 1984 for better views of Oakenholt Marsh and for wheelchair access. In 1986, the two-storey extension of the West Hide was approved. Construction of the present-day gas-fired Power Station by Powergen, which took place during 1992-96, had a disruptive effect on access and recording and a negative effect of loss of meadow habitats, though habitats at the western end of the Reserve were improved in "mitigation" of this damage. These included the very successful improvements to the Fly-Ash Lagoon (including closing the road that once ran alongside it) and the briefly-successful

creation of the Wetland Meadow. Other losses include much of the Rockcliffe woodland when the entrance road to the new Power Station was made (leaving the only mature trees around the present "Gardener's Compound"), and gradual, but complete, loss of the unique Nature Trail habitat to construction by the National Grid between 2007 and 2017. There have been some losses of riverside saltmarsh to natural erosion by the tides (estimated 60m wide loss between 1987 and 2007), but recent changes to the grazing regime on Oakenholt Marsh should allow a more natural saltmarsh vegetation to develop there.

In March 1987, Thelma Sykes noticed that Coltsfoot was no longer flowering along the road to West Hide and the grass was short. She attributed this to the expansion of rabbits from their traditional Nature Trail area.

### **The Early Years (1974-86)**

by Raymond A Roberts and published in DNS newsletters.

(I have added a few explanatory notes in italics, but otherwise changed nothing).

In 1974, the chairman of Connah's Quay District Council called a public meeting to determine whether there was sufficient interest to form a natural history group in Connah's Quay. Twenty people turned up and there was a unanimous agreement to form such a group. It was first called Deeside Naturalists' Club but soon changed its name to Deeside Naturalists' Society. Cedric Lynch was appointed chairman. The committee soon got underway planning a series of lectures which were held in the schoolroom of St John's Methodist Church. Members will recall fascinating talks by Valerie McFarland and Dr John Raines on the Dee. They were a revelation to a new society. Field meetings were planned to local high spots such as Wepre Park, the steelworks reserve and the shoreline of the Dee following the track alongside the nature trail.

One year on, the Government introduced a scheme called the "Quality of Life Experiment" by which funds could be allocated to organisations to expand their activities. The Society applied for a grant to buy a bird hide. It was successful. We were getting a bird hide but where would we put it? There were three fairly good birding areas in the Quay: Wepre Park, the CQ sewage works, a non runner, and the Dee shoreline. While we were trying to work this out, the members decided to build the hide themselves. Several members enrolled in an evening woodwork class in the Connah's Quay High School to build the hide themselves and save money to buy a telescope.

In the meantime, we asked the manager of the CEGB power station, Mr Keith Steward, who has been so helpful over the years, if we could erect the hide on the power station site overlooking the river and the embryo Bunded Pool. He kindly agreed and was much later to receive an MBE. CEGB were at that time undertaking considerable works with earth moving equipment. Miraculously, the earth moving equipment was turned around and within three or four days we had a Bunded Pool and later weirs (see photo on p. 97). So now the Reserve was really taking shape. In 1978, the CEGB and the Society were awarded a "Prince of Wales award" for conservation.

The CV of the first hide (now the "East Hide") is quite interesting. It was located on the embankment overlooking the Bunded Pool. On one particularly high tide, the river eroded the embankment and the hide slid down the embankment into the pool. It floated serenely across the pool. We could have been erecting the hide alongside the bandstand at Chester if an island in the pool had not halted its progress. At low water, the hide was taken apart and restored to its original position albeit on a firmer foundation.

Historically, the power station burned coal to produce steam to drive the turbines and produce electricity. Coal ash was the waste product of this activity. The power station added water to the fly



**The West Sluice on the Bunded Pool 1977: Keith Steward**

ash to form a slurry which was then pumped along a pipeline to an excavated lagoon on the salt marsh. Each lagoon had pile driven filter filled with stone to drain off the water. Such was the amount of ash produced that all the fields of the reserve are grown over several feet of ash. Eventually, the station ran out of space to deposit the ash, so the boundary of the site was extended to the stream across the front of the West Hide. The exercise created a large space to be filled. The fill commenced but shortly afterwards the power station ceased to generate. So no more ash. It was soon obvious that

**The original West Hide viewed from Papermill Stream 1978: Keith Steward**



an underground water course had been uncovered during the excavation. The area was filling up with fresh water. So now we had the Fly Ash Lagoon which has made a such a significant increase in the ornithological value of the site.

The West Hide was now in the wrong position. Its original base can still be seen at the top of the track which leads down to the new west hide. The West hide, which originally faced the river, was rebuilt in 1984 for better views of Oakenholt Marsh and for wheelchair access. In 1986, the two-storey extension of the West Hide was approved. This new hide would be a double decker. Plans were drawn up by Liverpool University and members soon got to work building the hide. All were delighted with the outcome. However, the vandals were still about. On one occasion the sides of the hide were kicked in leaving just vertical posts. Faith in human nature was restored when a man knocked on my door to ask if he could repair the hide. On another occasion, a car was driven through the back of the wooden hide. The car was then reversed to finish on the salt marsh where it was set alight. PowerGen then offered to build the new double decker hide which stands today seemingly impregnable to vandals. (Powergen [1989-2002, when it was acquired by E-on] was originally 50%-owned by the UK government; they demolished the old Power Station in 1992, prior to building the new gas-fired Station).

Over the the years, the DNS committee had thought about having a Field Studies Centre on the site. The adjacent Rockcliffe Hall, which had just been vacated by Ugandan Asians, was a long shot, but the county council which owned the building would not give consent. It was decided to build the Centre on one of the ash lagoon filters. It was built with the generous support of CEGB and contributions from DNS. A bricklayer and joiner from CEGB undertook this work. Later, the DNS commissioned staff from Merseyside County Museum to design the display using information provided by the Society. When the Centre was finished the Duke of Edinburgh was invited to open the centre which he did in 1983 (see photo on p.95). Chairman Oswald Davies presented him with an atomic ray-proof glass paperweight inscribed with a Shelduck. The vandals still hadn't finished with us. In 1986, the Field Studies Centre windows were smashed several times, the hides were vandalised and a grass-cutting machine was stolen. Repairs cost over £1,200. The windows of the centre were smashed and the cupboards trashed on two occasions. Unbreakable glass screwed to the window frames also proved no problem to them. They found that, by hitting the glass with a large stone, the glass would bend (but not break) and spring the screws from the frame. Hence the need for shutters. Vandalism has been a major problem over the years, the hides being severely damaged many times. Nowadays, security staff patrol the site and this has brought immense benefit to the reserve. We thank the electricity companies for their endeavour. The Reserve has had many ups and downs, but it has all been worth it, particularly when 700 members and visitors can visit it to record up to 247 birds from excellent facilities. Deeside Naturalists' Society is grateful to the various companies and their staff who have given so much to support this development. These include CEGB, PowerGen, EoN and Uniper. Finally, when all the above was going on the Society was designated as a Charity with the following objects. "To stimulate interest in natural history and play a part in the conservation of flora and fauna on Deeside and the surrounding area."

The original articles by Ray Roberts can be accessed at:  
[deenats.org.uk/newsletter/newsletterdec21.pdf](http://deenats.org.uk/newsletter/newsletterdec21.pdf) and  
[deenats.org.uk/newsletter/newsletterapr22.pdf](http://deenats.org.uk/newsletter/newsletterapr22.pdf)

## The Evolution of the Reserve from the building of the new Power Station (1993) to the Present Day.

Construction of the new Power Station lasted from autumn 1993 to summer 1996 with loss of grazing fields (by 70%), though some disturbance would also have occurred during the planning period of 1990-92. In the 1992/93 winter, it had been noted that cutting of the grazing fields increased field use by Lapwing, finches, gulls and Curlew. The E-on field (F10) was not cleared of building spoil and re-grassed until spring 1997. It may significant that the Grey Partridge last bred successfully in 1990 and was rarely seen after 1992, though the species was declining nationally.

In December 1994, a large increase in Power station construction activity since February 1993 was noted. Major disturbance to the saltmarsh by the Nature Trail was caused by laying a pipeline under the river which continued throughout 1995 (no birds on marsh or mudflats when workers were present). Access to the Nature Trail was not allowed again until April 1996. Disturbance to birds by heavy traffic along the east hide access road during the week was noted (continuing through 1995/96), but the monthly high and low water counts were done at weekends and are the only available data on bird numbers. Although heavy traffic ceased by summer 1996, construction workers were still taking tea breaks in front of East Hide and strolling over the banded pools. Major disturbance of Black-tailed Godwits during autumn migration was noted, although once again this may not show up on the peak counts done at weekends.

The fly ash lagoon was re-excavated and the mitigation pools prepared during 1994-1995. Critically, the road running alongside the lagoon was closed permanently. The wetland meadow, now in front of the Meadow Hide, was also created as part of the mitigation plan in 1995. The banks and island of the fly-ash lagoon were completed in spring 1995 and the island attracted Shelduck during March-May and a pair of Oystercatchers fledged one young on it. A pair of Mute Swan used the lagoon briefly and a variety of waders, including Ringed Plover and Curlew Sandpiper were seen in spring. A pair of Wheatear nested on the new Wetland meadow. The grass on the Wetland Meadow was cut in July/August 1995 but the failure of the Wetland Meadow to attract wildfowl and waders was noted in 1995, even though both pools were still holding rainwater by January 1996.

Up to 20 Curlew were using the Meadow in February 1996. The far Meadow pool would no longer hold water after 1996 and the liner was assumed to be damaged (it has never been repaired). In spring 1996, Western Yellow Wagtail and Meadow Pipit appeared to be using the Wetland Meadow. Coot, Mallard, Little Grebe and Oystercatcher nested successfully on the fly-ash lagoon. Peregrines raised one chick on a pylon in the Wetland Meadow. The near pool on the Meadow dried out and Coot abandoned their nest. The Meadow was not managed by grass-cutting in 1996. A large drop in the total number of June to August birds in 1996 compared with three previous years was described as "alarming", but September to November numbers were back to normal.

Rapid growth of reeds on the fly ash lagoon edges was already causing concern about the effect on its use by waders. In 1997, successful breeding on the lagoon included Oystercatcher, Mute Swan (on the island), two pairs of Coot, two pairs of Moorhen, two pairs of Mallard, Little Grebe and, for the first time, Tufted Duck. On the Wetland Meadow, Skylark, Meadow Pipit and Linnet nested. A Mallard also raised nine chicks on the Wetland Meadow pool. Peregrines nested successfully (one young) on a pylon near the Reserve entrance and two pairs of Oystercatchers tried to nest on the newly-regenerated E-on field after construction (F10). The west grazing field was cut in late summer but vegetation on the Wetland Meadow and Lagoon island was allowed to grow unchecked, until the former was cut in September and grazed by a large sheep flock in October.

On April 6<sup>th</sup> 1997, 30+ caravans of "travellers" set up camp on the main west field for several weeks:

disturbance was described as “difficult to assess”.

In summer 1998, two Lapwing pairs bred on the Wetland Meadow and Skylarks were still present. Overgrowth of the island deterred nesting on it, but the reeded margins of the fly-ash lagoon allowed Mute Swan, Little Grebe, Mallard (3-4 pairs) and Coot (4 pairs) to nest successfully. Oystercatcher were unsuccessful on both the bunded pools and the west grazing field.

In the winter of 1999/2000, it was noted that the farmer was allowing two Jack Russell terriers to “maraude” over the mitigation meadows (still happening in summer 2003!!). Foot-and-mouth disease restricted access to the Reserve for most of 2001.

By May 2002, gravel had been added to the lagoon island and birds nesting on it were Mute Swan (7 young), Canada Goose (6 young) and Oystercatcher; also nesting by Tufted Duck (3 young), Little Grebe (2 pairs), Mallard (3 pairs), Coot (4 pairs) and Moorhen (2 pairs). The Far Meadow pool was dry after March but had a Lapwing pair investigating for nest sites, while Coot nested on the Near Meadow pool. A Lapwing family was seen at the Near Meadow pool and raised 2 young which disappeared, probably due to predation. After the 2002 nesting season, the mitigation area was being used by more Curlew (47) and Canada Geese (670).

Bird monitoring for Powergen was taken over by Young Associates in March 2003 to gather bird behaviour data. It was noted that Curlew were using both grazing fields (mainly the east) for winter feeding (not roosting). In 2003, it was thought likely that Skylark nested on both grazing fields, as well as on the Wetland Meadow. Lapwing abandoned one nest on the Near Pool and after May 28<sup>th</sup> tried again near the Far Pool, but did not succeed. Oystercatcher failed again on the bunded pool area, but Mute Swan, Canada Goose and Coot (5 pairs) bred once again. Other nesters were Little Grebe (3 pairs), Moorhen (1 pair) Mallard (1 pair) and Tufted Duck (1 pair). A pair of Shelduck may have nested at the east bunded pool. Saltmarsh erosion was threatening the West Hide this year and the vegetation on the island was cut in August. Up to 400 summering Black-tailed Godwit were using the Wetland Meadow in June/July 2003. Three singing Skylarks were present near the fly-ash lagoon and on the west grazing field in 2003 and in 2004. In 2004, manure spreading on the east grazing field attracted 500 Lapwing on Feb 22<sup>nd</sup>. A new tenant farmer took over the grazing fields this year.

The same species nested on fly-ash lagoon in 2004, but swan and goose chicks were lost to predation and one adult swan was found partially-eaten by a Fox. It was reported that over 10 Foxes had been shot by farmers on Oakenholt and Flint Marshes that summer alone. Wetland Meadow was used by 88 Curlew and 77 Black-tailed Godwit on Nov 20<sup>th</sup> 2004. In winter 2004/05, grazing by 70 sheep and Badger activity were both thought to have improved the Wetland Meadow, attracting 970 Lapwing, 64 Curlew and 40 Golden Plover. Vegetation on the lagoon island was removed again. Usual nesting species were on the fly-ash lagoon with an Oystercatcher breeding attempt on the island, and an estimated 8 pairs of Skylark on the grazing fields plus mitigation area, though presence of up to 10 Magpies may have affected breeding success. Thistles and nettles had invaded 25% of the Wetland Meadow; all sheep were removed from the Reserve this summer (but they returned by October 2005) and both grazing fields and meadow were cut in September 2005.

In the 2005/06 winter, a hedgerow screening the East Grazing field from the road was removed; this was thought to reduce use of the field by waders. There were concerns that overgrazing all the fields (which necessitated feeding livestock with turnips) could affect Skylark nesting and extensive cutting of hedgerows in the mitigation area by E-on could affect other passerines. Nesting on the fly ash lagoon by Mute Swan, Coot and Little Grebe was recorded again, plus attempts by Lapwing and Oystercatcher. The new Wetland Meadow Hide was built in 2006. Badgers continued to be active in turning over the meadows and the exposed soil attracted waders. For the first 10 years, the Wetland Meadow had

attracted several hundred ducks and waders, including 12 Snipe in Feb 2007, but it is no longer actively managed and it no longer attracts significant numbers of birds.

In recent years, management has largely focussed on the fly ash lagoon: maintaining the central island for nesting birds and keeping a balance elsewhere between reedbed invasion, open mudbanks and open water. This has been a spectacular success with Black-headed Gulls nesting in 2019, closely followed by Avocets in 2021. Ruthless, but necessary, control of reedbed expansion did not prevent the addition of Reed and Sedge Warblers to the breeding species list.

At the other end of the Reserve, the history of management of the bunded pools and their three hides is more difficult to record. By autumn 1996, erosion of the saltmarsh and mudflats (2m of riverbank lost in 8 weeks) was causing fears that the “bunds” that protect the pools from the river might be washed away. Work on the revetment, completed by autumn 1996, may have helped to keep the river under control.

After the original landscaping of the pools by CEGB in the 1970s, continual attention to the sluices that control water levels has been necessary. Birdwatchers will remember times when the the pools, too shallow to retain water between high tides, dried out completely in the summer months. In May 1997, contractors began management of the bunded pool and had to remove shrubs and small trees near the East hide, which reduced screening of the road traffic. Landscaping of the central bunded pool was done from June 28<sup>h</sup> to Aug 17<sup>th</sup> 2005, after which the deeper water attracted feeding Common Terns. Re-building of the East Hide was completed in 2006. By 2011, the Middle and East hides were already brick-built, but the Dee hide was still wooden. The current key system for entrance and all hides was in place by this time, but it is unclear when the Dee hide was replaced with a brick structure and the bird feeders outside were put in place.

In 2007, E-on landscaped the east end of the bunded pool and created a new tree screen around the East hide. In 2009, access to the Field Study Centre and two of the bunded pool hides (Middle/East) was closed by E-on to enable construction work on the adjacent Power Station and a photo in the March 2009 newsletter shows that both the east bunded pool and the Study Centre pool had much more open water than they do today (as much as the Middle Hide pools). Water levels are critical for attracting wildfowl and waders and too much water can also be a problem.

After the Rabbits disappeared, grass cutting in the autumn also became essential to maintain good visibility of visiting waders. At the present time (2025), the pools in front of the East Hide have been neglected for some time: the river water that floods them on high tides is not being retained and the vegetation is out of control. The Dee and Middle Hides are currently excellent for viewing passage and wintering waders during the highest tides, but the lagoons still dry out .

## The Future of the Connah’s Quay Reserve

As this book is published in 2026, there are plans to develop a Carbon-Capture system for the Power Station which would involve industrial development on all the remaining grazing fields, apart from the Wetland Meadow mitigation area. Although every care will be taken by all concerned to minimize disruption to birdlife, we know from the experience of similar developments in the 1990s that some disruption to bird recording will be inevitable if birdwatchers are discouraged from visiting the Reserve by the construction activity, though access to all the hides will be maintained.

## Nature Reserve Flower List

Achillea millefolium	Yarrow	Verbascum lynchitis	White mullein
Anagallis arvensis	Scarlet pimpernel	Verbascum thapsus	Great mullein
Arctium minus	Lesser burdock	Veronica chamaedrys	Germander speedwell
Artemisia vulgaris	Mugwort	Veronica serpyllifolia	Thyme leaved speedwell
Beta vulgaris	Sea beet	Vicia hirsuta	Hairy tare
Blackstonia perfoliata	Yellow wort	Silene vulgaris	Bladder campion
Centaurium erythraea	Common centuary	<i>Aethusa cynapius</i>	Foal Parsley
Cerastium fontanum	Common mouse ear	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	Garlic Mustard
Chaerophyllum temulum	Rough chervil	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley
Chamerion angustifolium	Rosebay willowherb	<i>Arenaria norvegica</i>	Arctic Sandwort
Cirsium arvense	Creeping thistle	<i>Arenaria serpyllifolia</i>	Thyme-leaved Sandwort
Cirsium vulgare	Spear thistle	<i>Artemisia absinthium</i>	Wormwood
Cochlearia danica	Danish scurvygrass	<i>Bellis nigra</i>	Black Horehound
Cochlearia officinalis	Common scurvygrass	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy
Crepis capillaris	Smooth hawkbeard	<i>Blackstonia perfoliata</i>	Yellow Wort
Dactylorhiza fuchsii	Common spotted orchid	<i>Cardamine hirsuta</i>	Hairy Bittercress
Dactylorhiza praetermissa	Southern marsh orchid	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>	Cuckoo Flower
Daucus carota	Wild carrot	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Lesser Knapweed
Dipsacus fullonum	Teasel	<i>Cerastium glomeratum</i>	Sticky Monardella
Epilobium hirsutum	Greater willowherb	<i>Carduus marianus</i>	Marsh Thistle
Epilobium montanum	Broadleaved willowherb	<i>Cirsium palustre</i>	Marsh Thistle
Eupatorium cannabinum	Hemp agrimony	<i>Cosmos sulcatum</i>	Blacklock
Galium aparine	Goosegrass	<i>Calystegia sibirica</i>	Great Bindweed
Geranium dissectum	Cut leaved cranesbill	<i>Critheum maritimum</i>	Rock Saxifrage
Leontodon saxatilis	Lesser hawkbit	<i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i>	Spanish Bluebell
Medicago lupulina	Black medick	<i>Erophila verna</i>	Common Wilkeworm
Myosotis arvensis	Field forget me not	<i>Geranium molle</i>	Dovesfoot Cranesbill
Myosotis discolor	Changing forget me not	<i>Geranium pusillum</i>	Small Flowered Cranesbill
Odontites verna	Red bartisia	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb Robert
Orthopus perpusillus	Common Birdsfoot	<i>Glaux maritima</i>	Sea Milkwort
Helminthotheca echioides	Bristly ox tongue	<i>Galanthus nivalis</i>	Snowdrop
Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort plantain	<i>Haemochrysa perfoliata</i>	Sea Sandwort
Plantago major	Greater plantain	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	Perforated St John Wort
Potentilla anserina	Silverweed	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Cow Ear
Potentilla reptans	Creeping cinquefoil	<i>Lapsana communis</i>	Nippewort
Prunella vulgaris	Selfheal	<i>Lactuca scariola</i>	Prickly Lettuce
Ranunculus sceleratus	Celery leaved buttercup	<i>Lambium album</i>	White Dead Nettle
Reseda luteola	Weld	<i>Lambium purpureum</i>	Red Dead Nettle
Rubus fruticosus agg	Blackberry	<i>Lathyrus sativus</i>	Bitter Vetch
Rumex crispus	Curled dock	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Ox Eye Daisy
Senecio jacobaea	Common ragwort	<i>Linaria vulgaris</i>	Yellow Toadflax
Sherardia arvensis	Field madder	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Birdfoot Trefoil
Silene dioica	Red campion	<i>Mahoe monchata</i>	Marsh Mallow
Silene latifolia	White campion	<i>Matricaria discoides</i>	Pineapple Mayweed
Solanum nigrum	Blacknightshade	<i>Medicago</i>	Great Medick
Stachys palustris	Marsh woundwort	<i>Melilotus albus</i>	White Melilot
Torilis japonica	Upright hedge parsley	<i>Myrrhis odorata</i>	Wall Lettuce

Trifolium arvense	Hares foot clover	<i>Myrrhis odorata</i>	Sweet Cicely
Trifolium campestre	Hop trefoil	<i>Oenothera biennis</i>	Evening Primrose
Trifolium repens	White clover	<i>Ophrys apifera</i>	Bee Orchid
Trifolium pratense (rubens)	Red clover	<i>Papaver dubium</i>	Longheaded Poppy
Urtica dioica	Stinging nettle	<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Common Poppy

<i>Pilosella officinarum</i>	Mouse-ear Hawkweed	<i>Tripleurospermum odoratum</i>	Scentsless Mayweed
<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	Buckthorn Plantain	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Gorse
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	Knotgrass	<i>Urtica urens</i>	Annual Nettle
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow Buttercup	<i>Veronica hederifolia</i>	Blue Ivy-leaved Speedwell
<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>	Bulbous Buttercup	<i>Vicia sativa</i>	Common Vetch
<i>Ficaria verna</i>	Lesser Celandine	<i>Vicia sepium</i>	Bush Vetch
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup	<i>Leontodon autumnalis</i>	Autumn Hawkbit
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog rose	<i>Epilobium parviflorum</i>	Hoary Willowherb
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common Sorrel	<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	Shepherd's Purse
<i>Salicornia agg</i>	Glass Wort	<i>Lysimachia punctata</i>	Dotted Loosestrife
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Groundsel	<i>Sonchus asper</i>	Prickly Sowthistle
<i>Silene x hampeana</i>	Pink Campion	<i>Epilobium obscurum</i>	Short-fruited Willowherb
<i>Sinapsis arvensis</i>	Charlock	<i>Sagina apetala</i>	Annual Pearlwort
<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Bittersweet	<i>Veronica arvensis</i>	Wall Speedwell
<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>	Perennial Sowthistle	<i>Petasites fragrans</i>	Winter Heliotrope
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Smooth Sowthistle	<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	Hedge Bindweed
<i>Spargularia ?</i>	Sea Spurrey	<i>Sonchus-oleraceus?</i>	Field Sowthistle
<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	Hedge Woundwort	<i>Coronopus didymus</i>	Swinecress
<i>Stellaria ?</i>	Mouseeared Chickweed	<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Fat Hen
<i>Symphytum officinale</i>	Common Comfrey	<i>Sison ammonum</i>	Stone Parsley
<i>Taraxacum agg</i>	Dandelion	<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>	Pyramidal Orchid

The above list was compiled from the 2010 list of Mary Wright, with additions for 2011/2012 by Christine Hamer and by Dr. Ken Balkow (Sheffield). The additions have been appended to the earlier list so the plants are NOT in systematic order.

**DNS butterfly survey 2012 on Wetland Meadow (WM) and Nature Trail (NT) - average count per month**

By Christine Hamer

	April		May		June		July		August		Sept	
	NT	WM	NT	WM	NT	WM	NT	WM	NT	WM	NT	WM
Dingy skipper							2	1				
Large white					5	2	4	3	5			
Small white			3	5	13	6	5	4	6	10	1	4
Green veined white	1	1	5	1	6				2	6	3	1
Common blue			5		2				8	3	6	5
Holly blue										1		
Red admiral							1	2				
Small tortoiseshell	2	2		1	5		2	4	4	5	12	11
Comma		1					1		1			
Meadow brown							9	8	27	94	10	15
Gatekeeper							4	38+	7	54	2	2
Orange tip		1		2	2							
Small copper										1	1	1
Speckled wood		2		1						1		2
Ringlet											1	
Small heath									1	1		
Grayling											4	
Small skipper							1	2		12		
Large skipper				1			1	3				
Peacock	2	2		1	1	1			6	3	3	1
Silver washed fritillary									2			

**Mammals**

This is based on casual historical records, without systematic recording. Use of hide logbooks (the source of most mammal records) almost ceased after 2018 with the advent of Birdtrack recording.

**Hedgehog:** found dead in 1978 and Aug 1987

**Mole:** field signs rarely recorded

**Common Shrew:** found dead infrequently e.g. in June 1986

**Rabbit:** common, but no longer abundant (see text)

**Brown Hare:** One on Apr 4<sup>th</sup> 2009

**Grey Squirrel:** common

**Bank Vole:** seen 2016

**Field Vole:** identified from kestrel pellet in Sep 1987

**Water Vole:** seen from West Hide, Mar 8<sup>th</sup> 1989

**Mouse spp:** few records, e.g. found dead in Sep 1986 and Jun 1987

**Brown Rat:** common; max count of 16 on Apr 27<sup>th</sup> 2016. In 1989, one was chased across the marsh by 15 redshank and a curlew.

**Fox:** present, and at times abundant (see text). Average of 8 records per annum during 1985-89. 20 records, including cubs, in 2016. 8 records in 2015, but 55 in 2009.

**Badger:** present (see text) but few daytime records, e.g. 3 together in Apr 2009 and 1 on Sep 30<sup>th</sup> 2017. 5 records in Apr 2009.

**Stoat:** average of one record per annum during 1985-89. 19 records in 2017 (prey included rabbit and blue tit!), 2 records in 2015, 4 in 2009. One took a Teal on Feb 6<sup>th</sup> 2006.

**Weasel:** average of 5 records per annum during 1985-89, but only one record in 2017 and not recorded 2016 or 2015. In 1977-78, weasels were more common than stoats.

**Polecat:** one from West Hide on Aug 25<sup>th</sup> 2009 (John and Daphne McWha only)

**[Ferret]:** once common and very tame when rabbit hunting was common (see text)

**Otter:** rarely recorded in the river

**Common Seal:** rarely recorded in the river

**Grey Seal:** sometimes recorded in the river (average 3 records per annum during 1985-89, once having caught a salmon). 3 records in 2017 when one caught a flatfish.

**Harbour Porpoise:** One in river on Mar 25<sup>th</sup> 2005.

Bats: Pipistrelle and Daubenton's have been recorded

(Common Toad: common)

(Common Frog: common)

A list of Moths and Fungi can be found in the 1985-87 Report on-line at: <https://www.deenats.org.uk/publications.html>

About the Author: G E Morris BA (Cantab), D.Phil (Sussex), Professor of Biochemistry (Wales, Keele) I started work at Deeside College in Connah's Quay in Autumn 1984 and soon began to spend my lunch hour watching birds on the Reserve. I offered to store the Reserve records in computer format and Raymond Roberts accepted readily. From Dec 1985 to Dec 1990, I had taken over writing the Newsletter bird reports from Thelma Sykes and Joan Davidson, who had produced excellent Annual Reports during 1976-84, and I then produced my first full DNS Bird Report for 1985-1987, followed by annual Reports in 1988 and 1989. By 1990, my academic workload had increased with new research grants that led to my promotion to a University of Wales Personal Chair and I left Deeside College in 1996. My DNS membership lapsed in 1990 until I re-joined the Society in 2007. From 2012, I produced annual on-line Reports until 2018 when Peter Haslem took over as DNS Bird Recorder. From 2021 to 2025, I took on the role of NE Wales Bird Recorder and produced annual Reports for Flintshire and Denbighshire.

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Back cover photos: Pyramidal Orchids: Glenn E. Morris and  
Fly Ash Lagoon 2024: Peter Haslem

