

DEESIDE NATURALISTS SOCIETY BIRD REPORT, 2012

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

Glenn Morris, February, 2013.

(With plant/butterfly data from Christine Hamer and Mary Wright)



Swallows on migration near the road to West Hide (photo: GEM)

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

This bird report is dedicated to all members of DNS who have shared their outstanding birding abilities by entering records in the hide logbooks, and especially those who have made my life easier by helping me to distinguish reliable records from optimistic ones.

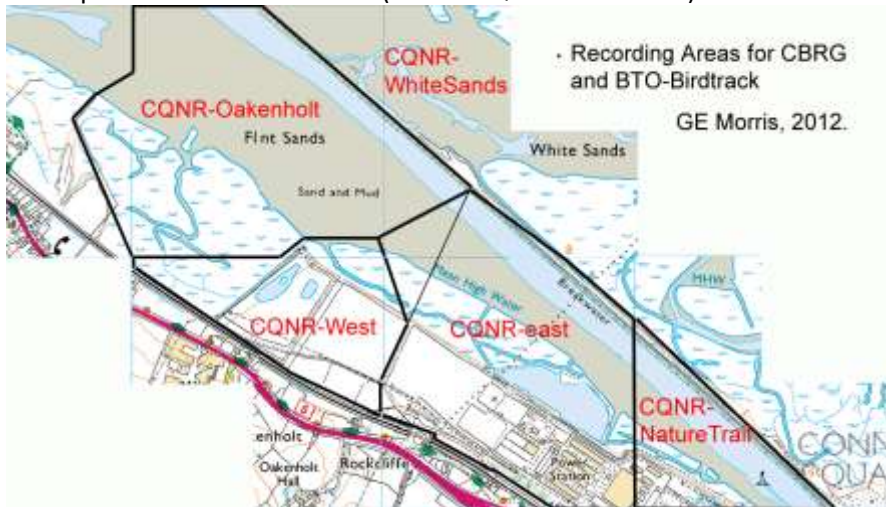
The bird species list for the Connah's Quay Reserve (inc. RSPB Oakenholt Marsh) has now reached 226 in its 36-year history of bird recording, although this total does include about 15 that are likely or definite escapes from captivity.

This year alone 131 species were recorded: Glossy Ibis was a new bird and there were four new escapees (Orinoco Goose, Cape Shelduck, Reeve's Pheasant and Diamond Dove). Other species seen this year, but only on very few previous occasions, were Manx Shearwater, Red-throated Diver, Waxwing, Redpoll, Snow Bunting and Lapland Bunting.

In these days of cheap (relatively) lightweight high-zoom cameras, there is little excuse for birders not making photographic records of unusual sightings for ID purposes. This report generally takes logbook records at face value, even with little or no supporting evidence for unusual species, provided there is a legible "signature" to indicate who is taking responsibility for the record.

Please note: records described as 4th or 5th, etc., for the Reserve may have to be revised at a later date, especially passerines. This is because no complete CQNR bird reports were published in 1990-91 and 1997-2008, when they were replaced by the Clwyd Monitoring High and Low Water Counts (almost exclusively wildfowl and wader counts). Logbook records have "gone missing" pre-2002 (West Hide) and pre-2005 (bundled pool hides), hopefully temporarily, but it is possible that many passerine and some wildfowl/wader records have not been taken into account. Other sources (Clwyd Bird Reports and local birding websites) have been taken into account. Past CQNR bird reports are available on the DNS website (members only).

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



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

THE SPECIES LIST FOR 2012.

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

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

Although they once bred on the fly ash lagoon, they are now a sporadic visitor, though large winter flocks have appeared on the river.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	3	0	0	2	2	0	0	1	30	34	7

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)

A substantial flock winters across the river, often hidden behind the revetment. Some of them occasionally visit the Reserve, often on the river's edge at low tide.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	30	40	6	0	0	0	0	0	6	9	0

White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*)

The 5th record for the Reserve was a single on Oakenholt Marsh on Sep 3rd (photo: KJ, BH).

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

Although many come to the Dee estuary each winter and can sometimes be seen on Burton marshes in hundreds, few are seen on the Reserve. They are recorded almost annually in small numbers, but 16 on the marsh with Canadas on Nov 8th (KJ, BH) was the only record this year.

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) **(B)**

Nested successfully again in the fly ash lagoon area this year. They can be seen on Oakenholt Marsh or the fly ash lagoon during most of the year, with numbers usually peaking in early autumn.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cont	600	500	40	24	40	187	450	500	1090	186	1871	1000

Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)

Usually seen among the flocks of Canada Geese on Oakenholt Marsh. A flock of 5-26 birds between July 25th- Aug 1st was the only long-term visit.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	8	0	1	1	1	26	5	1	0	0	0

Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla*)

Although substantial flocks winter further down the estuary, this is an uncommon visitor to the Reserve. The only records were of single birds on the marsh on Jan 12th and 15th (dark-bellied) and Oct 3rd.

Orinoco Goose (*Neochen jubata*)

This escapee from South America was recorded several times from Oct 31st onwards and is another **new species** for the Reserve. It was usually seen with the Canada Goose flock.



Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

No evidence of nesting this year, but the usual influx for the late summer moult. Oakenholt marsh and the mudflats are their usual haunt.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	156	250	190	46	72	300	200	95	38	87	30	100

Cape Shelduck (*Tadorna cana*)

A single escapee recorded on Oakenholt Marsh on Jan 22nd and 23rd was a **new species** for the Reserve (KJ, BH, P&SH). It was present again on several dates on Oct/Nov. Seen also at Burton Mere across the estuary

Teal (*Anas crecca*)

These frequent the mudflats, lagoon and bunded pools for most of the year.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	300	162	125	12	0	2	2	56	430	392	257	327

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)

The only three records were from the fly ash lagoon on Feb 5th (2), Feb 16th (4) and Mar 25th (3).

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) (**B**)

Several pairs nested successfully in both lagoon and bunded pool areas. The highest numbers arrive for the summer moult, like the Shelduck.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	82	80	55	14	24	208	133	190	104	104	46	32

Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

This sporadic winter visitor is usually seen on the river from West Hide, sometimes in very large numbers (max 400 on Jan 27th [GR]), but rarely staying long. Six seen there on Sep 16th were among the earliest arrivals.

Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

A winter visitor to grassland around the fly ash lagoon and bunded pools

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	300	117	90	0	0	0	0	0	11	130	420	1500

Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

Visits the fly ash lagoon in small numbers outside the breeding season

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	6	10	20	9

Pochard (*Aythya ferina*)

An uncommon visitor to the fly ash lagoon which held 2 on Feb 16th and a single on May 24th.

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

All records are from the fly ash lagoon where a pair nested successfully

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	20	10	15	6	6	6	6	5	5	4	5

Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

Once a very common visitor to the bunded pools outside the breeding season, it has now become quite uncommon. There were 3 present on Jan 23rd and a single on Jan 29th. There was also a brief and very early visit by a single female/juvenile on August 1st (GEM).

Redbreasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*)

There were singles on the bunded pool on Feb 13th/19th, Mar 4th/5th and Dec 14th, plus one on the river from West Hide on July 5th

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)

There were records from the bunded pool area on Jan 23rd (2) and Mar 7th (1), but the highest count was of 6 “redheads” flying in to rest on the river bank near West Hide on July 15th (photo: GEM)



Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)

Becoming a more frequent visitor to the grazing fields, with 6 records of single birds and 2 records of a pair on Mar 24th/25th and Apr 1st.

Reeve’s Pheasant (Syrmaticus Reevesii)

Another **new species** for the Reserve and another escapee. A very tame female was **photographed** on the Rockcliffe path during the Reserve



Open Day on Oct 14th.

Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea)

Like the Little Egret, this species is also found all year round and often side-by-side with Egrets.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	1	4	1	0	2	4	8	7	8	6	9	2

Little Egret (Egretta garzetta)

This species nests at Burton across the estuary and can be found throughout the year on Oakenholt Marsh and the bunded pools, where sizeable numbers sometimes congregate in autumn.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	3	4	12	5	4	6	21	25	33	11	4	2

Manx Shearwater (Puffinus puffinus)

A bird flying up-river past the bunded pools at high tide on Sep 19th (PDS) was only the 3rd record for the Reserve and the first since 1988.

Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo)

Non-breeders are present for most of the year. They usually frequent the river edge and the Nature Trail river Piles, but also fish regularly on the bunded pools.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	55	40	40	5	4	12	24	17	52	64	66	60

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

A **new species** for the Reserve, a single bird was seen on Oakenholt Marsh on Jan 23rd (GR). Possibly the same bird as that recorded at RSPB Burton in Nov 2011.

Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)

Since it was first recorded in 1997, this species has become a regular winter visitor to the Dee estuary as breeding numbers on the East coast of England have increased and is an almost-annual visitor to the Reserve. This year a single bird was seen on Oakenholt Marsh on the high tides of Jan 12th (AW), 23rd and 26th (GR, KJ, BH).

Redthroated Diver (*Gavia stellata*)

A logbook record from the bunded pool on Oct 6th (GJ) was only the 5th record for the Reserve and the first for nearly 20 years. No photo.

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) (B)

Nested successfully on the fly ash lagoon where it is resident, but a single also visited the bunded pools on Feb 20th and Oct 14th. Easy to miss unless you watch the lagoon for quite a while.

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

Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

This species used to come up the river on high tides in quite large numbers, but counts have declined over the past 6 or 7 years. Maximum of 6 on Oct 18th (GR) and several singles during September were recorded from the river. A juvenile was present on the bunded pools Sep 28th-30th.

Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)

A rare visitor to the Reserve itself, although there is one August record from Oakenholt Marsh (P&SH), it is more often seen across the river, either along the revetment or over White Sands. There were 3 more August singles (PDS, KJ, BH) and one on Mar 8th (EG&PJ).

Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)

This species was seen on the Reserve with similar frequency to the Marsh Harrier. An adult male was seen close to the West hide on Dec 5th (PDS) and there were ringtails on Oakenholt Marsh on Jan 27th (GR), over the fly ash lagoon on Mar 21st (GEM) and over White Sands on Aug 13th (KJ, BH).

Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)

Very few records this year, mainly in autumn and early winter.

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

Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) (B?)

The maximum count of 5 on May 20th included a pair displaying. The concentration of sightings in the summer months also suggests breeding in the locality.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sightings	0	0	3	7	16	12	9	3	2	10	8	3

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

A fairly frequent visitor, but by no means a common sight.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sightings	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	4	6	9	2	1

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)



A rare sight nowadays, and even more rarely will it perch for a photo, like the individual below on the Reserve Open Day (Oct 14th).

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

Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*) (B)

Almost as common as the Buzzard on the Reserve, a pair nested successfully on the Power Station, raising one young which was ringed (IS). Apart from the Power Station towers near the Field Study Centre, pylons on the reserve are good places to look for perched peregrines, especially those near the entrance gate and the fly ash lagoon.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sightings	3	7	5	1	4	3	7	9	8	10	4	1

Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) (B)

Nested successfully on the fly ash lagoon, where adults feeding young were first seen on June 20th (JH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	4	3	4	2	3	2	3	5	7	0	3

Coot (*Fulica atra*) (B attempted)

Always present on the fly ash lagoon, with larger numbers in winter

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	n/c	17	12	3	4	6	2	3	3	2	3	18

Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) (B attempted)

Only small numbers are seen feeding, but on high tides, very large flocks fly in to roost at Flint Point on Oakenholt Marsh.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	1000	1000	450	300	400	12	82	2400	2100	3200	5000	900

Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)

A group of 4 feeding on the river mudflats near West Hide on Aug 13th is the only record (JH), though this species now nests successfully across the river at RSPB Burton.

Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)

Present sporadically in small numbers, mainly on passage. One spring record of 7 on April 26th and an early return passage of 6 on June 2nd

were followed by several July/August records with a maximum of 13 on Aug 25th (P&SH). Look for them on the mudflats.

Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*) (B)

There was only one record from the Dee hide on April 23rd this year (RE), but a pair raised one young (ringed) in a secure location close to the Reserve (IS).

Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

The only record was a group of 3 birds from West Hide on Feb 5th (P&SH).

Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

The only records were of 15 on Feb 12th (GR) and a single on Oct 17th (PDS).

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

No evidence of nesting, but large numbers on the mudflats and grazing fields in winter.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	500	1000	0	0	0	0	15	55	84	185	635	263

Knot (*Calidris canutus*)

They feed regularly with the Black-tailed Godwits and roost at high tide, sometimes in large numbers.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	5	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	1500	800	100	100

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)

This seashore bird is an unusual visitor to the Reserve mudflats, but this year there were two logbook records each of 3 birds on June 2nd and July 17th (P&SH).

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)

A single on the banded pool on Sep 1st is the only record this year (P&SH).

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

Rather irregular in winter, but when they do appear, numbers can be large.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	1000	1000	0	7	2	0	12	2	1	50	8	100

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

Singles on the bunded pool on Aug 31st (GP) and Sep 29th (EN) and two on Sep 16th (GR) were the only records this year.

Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)

Two birds spent some time on the fly ash lagoon island in mid-February and the first return date was Sep 23rd, with 2 there on Nov 29th. They are usually found crouched at the water's edge on the island or margins.

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Hardly ever absent except for a brief period of mid-May to late June. On passage in July/Aug they can be seen at close range on the mudflats and bunded pool, but the huge winter flocks (Sep onwards) are best seen as they come to Oakenholt Marsh to roost with Oystercatcher at high tide.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	78	220	45	200	165	400	500	1280	2000	3500	1500	2

Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*)

Only four records: a flock of three on Feb 5th and July 17th (P&SH) and singles with the Black-tailed flock on July 15th (GEM) and Oct 18th (GR).

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

Four spring records during May 7th-10th (P&SH, KJ, BH) with a maximum of 4 on the 10th and another on the 21st (GR). There were also return migration records on July 16th (P&SH) and 30th (PDS) and Sep 16th (GR).

Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)

Present throughout the year and throughout the Reserve, including the grazing fields.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	5	74	50	24	22	12	30	100	60	122	114	110

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

Passage migrant in small numbers with a maximum of 4 from the West Hide on July 17th (P&SH). They also frequent the bunded pools and the river upstream from the Nature Trail.

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

Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*)

Numbers were a little lower this year with a maximum count of 11 on Sep 27th (KJ, BH). This is one of the specialities of the Reserve with significant numbers in autumn and a few overwintering. They are best seen on the bunded pools at high tide but can also be seen near the West Hide. They sometimes form small groups that feed frantically in deeper water than common redshanks, but they can be overlooked when roosting among redshanks with their heads buried. The first autumn migrants often include one or two in all-black breeding plumage.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	11	8	4	1

Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)

Another Reserve speciality, which frequents the bunded pools like the previous species. Autumn numbers were also a little lower this year than the recent average, but up to 7 birds were present in winter. They tend to keep separate from other waders and form small groups.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	1	2	4	3	2	0	12	18	14	9	7	7

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)

Redshank numbers increase from late July onwards with the largest numbers gathering on the bunded pools at high tide.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	150	100	100	6	0	0	400	526	1010	1400	270	120

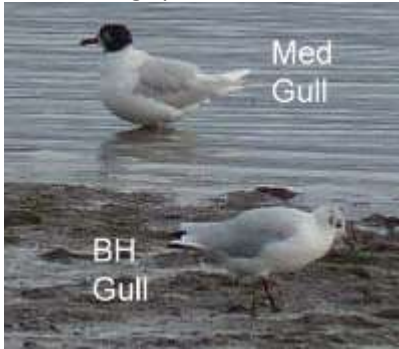
Blackheaded Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) (**B attempted**)

Counts are not made systematically, but there is a distinct post-breeding peak in July/Aug with numbers dwindling slowly thereafter.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	nc	280	85	30	55	340	1000	700	253	270	80	nc

Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*)

There were two near the West Hide on July 5th (P&SH) and a single was present July 27th-29th (TL, GEM: **photo**). This species is increasing rapidly as a nesting species in the UK and there is a post-breeding dispersal in



July.

Common Gull (*Larus canus*)

This species is surprisingly uncommon on the Reserve during the day, in spite of large winter numbers farther down the estuary and on inland farming areas. It was recorded in Feb (max. 6), Mar, July and Sep this year.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)

The most common of the larger gulls on the Reserve and present all year. Both the UK “light” subspecies, *graellsii*, and the dark Baltic subspecies, *fuscus*, occur, the latter being as black as the Greater Black-backed, but with yellow legs.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	50	nc	6	14	30	30	66	100	120	160	43	nc

Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus cachinnans*)

A hard gull to identify, singles are recorded every year on the Reserve, but they don't seem to stay long and photographic evidence is still lacking. It is a Mediterranean species, gradually moving north and west into mainland Europe and UK records are usually post-breeding. There was one logbook record this year on May 11th (AN).

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

Less common than Lesser Black-backed among roosting flocks, though it may be equally common flying over. An unusually large number of 370 was present on Sep 12th (GR).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	nc	25	8	5	42	8	15	60	370	50	4	nc

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)

The counts given below may underestimate this species.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	25	5	4	7	5	13	2	2	12	26	10	40

Little Gull (*Hydrocoloeus minutus*)

There was one record of 5 birds in the East Hide logbook (DC) on June 13th – no details given. Single birds were reported elsewhere on the Estuary in June and July.

Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*)

The first record was of 14 on April 16th (KJ, BH), while the 1st week of May brought 3 records of 6-26 birds and a late record of 40 on June 2nd (P&SH) was the highest count ever for the Reserve. The only autumn record was a single on Aug 2nd (P&SH). Usually seen in flight over the river, they are sometimes seen roosting with Common Terns on sandbars from the West Hide.

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

The highest count was 180 on May 7th (P&SH) and this was the 3rd highest count for the Reserve.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	0	0	1	180	80	18	18	0	0	0	0

Feral Pigeon

All logbook records are of 1-2 birds during the summer months (May-Aug).

Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*)

There were 6 records of 1-3 birds between July 25th and Aug 26th (GEM, PDS). The best place to look is on the grazing fields or around the fly ash lagoon.

Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)

Present all year with a maximum count of 27 on Mar 25th. No proof of breeding, likely though it is.

Diamond Dove (*Geopelia cuneata*)

This escapee Australian bird was a **new species** for the Reserve. Perched on the fence by the fly ash lagoon on Aug 3rd, it was almost taken by a Peregrine. A detailed description (PDS) is on record.

Swift (*Apus apus*)

Recorded regularly between May 2nd and Aug 3rd, the maximum count was 150 on May 13th (PDS).

Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

Recorded this year from July 17th onwards as a rather irregular visitor to both the bunded pools and the papermill stream near West Hide. December was the best month with 4 records from the bunded pools.

Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*)

Recorded in March and all months from June onwards, 13 records altogether of 1-2 birds, both females and juveniles. Non-intuitively, juveniles have the all-red cap, males a red patch at the back of the head and females no red at all.

Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)

There were 6 records of 1-2 birds outside the breeding season, mainly from the Rockcliffe area near the Reserve entrance.

Magpie (**B**) (*Pica pica*)

Present all year with a maximum count of 18 on May 2nd.

Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)

Recorded in most months with a high count of 100 on Nov 28th.

Attracted to the grazing fields in summer, they are also found with crows on the marsh.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	0	0	6	34	47	0	6	30	42	100	0

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)

The records are of 2 birds on Sep 28th, with crows and jackdaws on the marsh, two flying over on Oct 14th and 6 flying over on Nov 28th (GEM).

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

Numerous on marsh, mudflats and grazing fields with peak numbers in the summer.

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	nc	12	20	15	32	45	50	32	18	40	40	22

Raven (**B**) (*Corvus corax*)

Possibly nesting in the Power Station, 2 adults were present with 2 young on the grazing field during June 4th-5th (GEM) and one was observed at a nest site on April 1st (HA). There were 8 birds on Aug 6th (PDS) and the 2nd highest count for the Reserve of 11 birds on Aug 28th (GEM).

Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*)

Thirteen birds were seen in the Rockcliffe area on Dec 16th (P&SH) and this was only the 4th year that they have been recorded on the Reserve. Numbers increased to 23 by Dec 23rd. This has been an "invasion" winter.

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)

The only records were on March 11th, March 22nd and Nov 12th (KJ, BH), all of 2 birds.

Blue Tit (*Parus caeruleus*) (B)

The main occupant of Reserve nest-boxes, the highest count was of 14 on Sep 23rd.

Great Tit (*Parus major*) (B)

Another common nesting species with a maximum count of 9 on July 15th.

Coal Tit (*Parus ater*)

Two birds in the Rockcliffe woodland on Oct 14th was only the 5th Reserve record (photo: GEM), the last being in 1989, though this common species must have been overlooked.

Skylark (B?) (*Alauda arvensis*)

Although recorded singing throughout Mar to Sep, there was no confirmation of successful breeding this year and the largest flock recorded was of 40 on Jan 23rd (GR).

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)

There were 3 records of this passage migrant on the fly ash lagoon of 1-2 birds in May and a single on Aug 1st.

Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

The highest counts this year were 80 on May 7th and 60 on Aug 11th.

House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*)

The highest count on passage was of 22 birds on May 20th.

Longtailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*)

There were records from nearly every month, with a high count of 24 on Sep 23rd.

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) (B)

The first record was on Mar 15th (BH) and the last on Sep 30th (GEM). An adult feeding one young near the bunded pool on July 22nd may be the first recorded evidence of breeding on the Reserve (GEM).

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

The first record was of 2 birds on April 26th and there were 5 more records until mid-May. There were 4 records on the return migration between July 22nd and Aug 3rd.

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

The first record this year was on Mar 25th. A family party of 2 adults and 2 young in the Rockcliffe woods on July 8th may be the first recorded evidence of breeding on the Reserve (GEM), though there is little doubt that they have bred in the past.

Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*)

There are records of two singing males on May 2nd and another on June 8th in the same hedgerows near the Reserve entrance (GEM). There was also a single near the west hide on July 30th (PDS)

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

The maximum count of 5 on May 16th referred to 3 separate pairs or singing males. A family party was observed to confirm breeding on July 20th.

Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

There were two records, one of a singing male on May 16th and another from the fly ash lagoon on July 16th.

Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*) **(B?)**

Two birds, including a singing male, were present in reed beds on the fly ash lagoon from June 4th onwards and seen (and **photographed**) from the West Hide by many observers. The last record was of 2 birds described as juveniles on July 30th (KJ, BH), so there is a possibility of breeding for the first time on the Reserve.



Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*)

Single birds in the hedgerows near the entrance on June 26th (GEM) and Oct 4th (P&SH).

Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) (**B?**)

A common resident. This bird is most easily detected when in full song between March and July. The maximum count was 6 on July 22nd.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

They are often seen on grazing fields with peak numbers on summer evenings. The high count of 2000 was recorded on July 7th (JH) and 10th (PH).

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Count	0	300	0	0	3	70	2000	86	43	40	30	12

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

Several pairs were seen carrying food to the nest or with recently-fledged young. The highest count was 12 on May 20th and Oct 14th.

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)

There were 7 birds in the Rockcliffe woodland on Nov 19th and one near West hide on Dec 6th.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)

There were of 4 birds on Feb 23rd and many records of up to 30 birds in November

Song Thrush (**B?**) (*Turdus philomelos*)

A singing male held territory near the Reserve entrance throughout spring and early summer. There was an influx of up to 8 birds in this area near the end of Sep and early Oct.

Mistle Thrush (**B**) (*Turdus viscivorus*)

A pair nested successfully near the bunded pool and was seen feeding young near the Middle Hide. There was a high count of 8 birds on Power Station structures on Sep 30th (GEM)

Robin (B) (*Erithacus rubecula*)

A common resident. Recorded throughout the year, there was a high count of 6 singing males on Sep 23rd

Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

There was a male near the 2nd entrance gate on July 22nd and a female in the helipad hedgerow on Aug 24th (GEM)

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)

A good year for this species on passage with one present May 8th-10th (KJ, BH), another July 16th-17th (P&SH) and one **photographed** with a Stonechat on the barbed wire fences near the fly ash lagoon on July 22nd (GEM).

Stonechat (*Saxicola torquatus*)

One present with a Whinchat on July 22nd was the only record.

Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

The first record was of 2 birds on Mar 19th (KJ, BH) and the highest spring count was 8 on May 8th (KJ, BH). In autumn, only singles were recorded in the logbooks (last record Oct 5th), but on the “northwalesbirding” website “the black fox” recorded a flock of 10 on Aug 31st and showed an excellent photo of one of them.

Dunnock (B?) (*Prunella modularis*)

A common resident. Most often recorded when in song from late Feb to July.

House Sparrow (B) (*Passer domesticus*)

This species is usually seen only in July and Aug when young birds are brought onto the Reserve. The highest count was 20 in the helipad hedgerow on July 8th. An adult was seen carrying food to a likely nest in the hedgerow on June 4th.

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava flavissima*)

Singles only on passage on May 7th (P&SH) and Sep 4th (GP).

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)

One or two wintering on the Rockcliffe woods path Sep 28th-Nov 28th (GEM: photo) and one near the Field Study Centre on Oct 14th (PM) were the only records.

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba alba*)

Singles on Sep 4th (GEM) and Sep 19th (“the black fox”: **photo** on northwalesbirding).

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

An adult feeding young on the bunded pool on June 4th is consistent with nesting on Power Station buildings. There was a high count of 9 near the West Hide on June 17th.

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)

The highest count was only 5 birds on Aug 8th.

Rock Pipit (*Anthus petrosus*)

This species is usually recorded on the rocks around the West Hide in winter. This year there were records of 3 on Feb 5th (SS) and 1 on Feb 11th (P&SH).

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

The largest early winter flock was only 14 birds on Feb 23rd, but 50 were found on Nov 18th, 120 on Nov 28th, 200 on Dec 1st and an amazing 1000 on Dec 5th (PDS), the largest number ever on the Reserve, (large finch flocks were widely reported in North Wales at this time). Singing males were the only evidence of possible breeding.

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

The only record this year was of a single in the large Chaffinch flock of Nov 28th (AW).

Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*)

The largest flock was 10 birds on Sep 28th and Oct 5th. Singing males were the only evidence of possible breeding.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

The largest post-breeding flock was of 120 birds on Sep 28th.

Linnet (B) (*Carduelis cannabina*)

Evidence of nesting included an adult carrying food on June 4th and a family party with young on July 15th. The largest post-breeding flocks were of 50 birds on July 17th and 29th and Aug 8th.

Twite (*Carduelis flavirostris*)

A winter flock of 40-60 birds was present around the West Hide Jan 23rd-26th (GR, KJ, BH). There were further records of 8 on Mar 11th and 2 on Mar 21st. A flock returned in late November with 30 present on Nov 23rd and a single on Dec 16th. Possibly the flock seen at Flint Castle during the 2012/2013 winter.

Lesser Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea cabaret*)

Four birds near the Middle hide on Jan 15th was only the third record for the Reserve (DOJ), but then a single bird was seen on the road behind the East Hides on Mar 2nd & 7th (EN) and another was seen in the birches near the reserve entrance on Oct 29th (KJ, BH, PDS).

Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

Recorded in most months, the highest count was of 5 birds on Feb 6th (KJ, BH). Recorded all over, but easiest to find in the Rockcliffe area.

Reed Bunting (B?) (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

A pair held permanent territory near the West Hide during the breeding season but success was not confirmed this year. The maximum count of 4 was on Feb 16th (KJ, BH).

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

Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*)

A record this year of 2 birds seen across the river on the revetment on Dec 26th was only the 4th reserve record (DeeEstuaryBirding).

Lapland Bunting (*Calcarius lapponicus*)

Two were recorded on Oakenholt Marsh on Jan 27th (GR). There were also logbook records of 3 on Feb 8th, 2 on Feb 10th and 1 on Feb 11th in front of West Hide. Unfortunately, the only photos taken of 2 birds were not actually Lapland Buntings. At least one February bird is likely to have been a Lapland Bunting (AW, P&SH), although it was too far away for a photo. This was only the second record of this species for the Reserve.

Contributors

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

All logbook records with a legible observer name are valuable and are submitted to BTO Birdtrack with the observer name. The names below are given to show who takes responsibility for some of the more unusual counts or sightings, so that queries can be directed to them. Most of the unusual observations are not supported by photos or detailed descriptions, but when they are this is indicated in the text.

H Abbot (HA)

D Colton (DC)

Ray Eades (RE)

Peter & Sue Haslem (P&SH)

Joan Hotchkiss (JH)

Phil Hotchkiss (PH)

David Owen Jones (DOJ)

G Jones (GJ)

K Lloyd-Jones & B Hayes (KJ, BH), who also contributed to Curlew Survey

T Lovatt (TL)

GE Morris (GEM)

P Moulton (PM)

A Nevitt (AN)

E Nixon (EN)

G Pepler (GP)

G Robinson (GR)

PD Shenton (PDS)

S Skelton (SS)

Ian Spence (IS)

A Wallbank (AW)

“the black fox”

Survey of the Use of Grazing Fields by Curlew.

Spot counts were done at various times and dates from Sep 23rd to Nov 23rd (two months) in 2012 by GEM, KJ and BH. Fields were little used by other species during this period (though they are at other seasons).

The results show that all four grazing fields are used by Curlew for feeding, especially in the early morning. They are sensitive to disturbance, when they fly to other fields or to the estuary mudflats.

Date	Time	E-on field F10	West field F9 "Hughie"	Fly ash field P13	Back field (railway)	TOTAL
Sep 23	8AM	12	25	0	0	37
Sep 27	9AM	0	40	0	0	40
Sep 30	8AM	8	32	0	0	40
Oct 4	11AM	0	11	0	0	11
Oct 5	9AM	40	12	0	0	52
Oct 5	11AM	0	16	29	0	45
Oct 6	3PM	0	8	3	0	11
Oct 8	11.30AM	11	38	0	0	49
Oct 14	9AM	1	1	4	70	76
Oct 17	9AM	0	0	nd	62	62
Oct 17	10AM	21	0	0	0	21
Oct 19	1PM	0	0	0	0	0
Oct 25	11AM	11	0	48	0	59
Oct 28	8AM	0	26	0	94	120
Oct 31	9AM	20	41	3	0	64
Nov 1	10.30AM	0	35	0	0	35
Nov 4	9AM	0	30	0	18	48
Nov 7	11AM	0	0	32	0	32
Nov 17	11.30AM	0	46	0	0	46
Nov 23	9.30AM	0	43	72	0	115

Nature Reserve Flower List

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

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

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

The first two lists (black and red) are in alphabetical order of the latin names.

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			

A detailed analysis of these results, together with records for 2011 is available (open access) at:

<http://www.deesidenaturalists.org.uk/public/butterflyreport.html>

Some favourite perches!

Peregrine on the Power Station.



Kingfisher at CQNR

