



# British Energy



## Heysham Nature Reserve Newsletter Winter 2008

Weather these last few weeks has certainly felt of a wintery nature. The mornings have seen some hard frosts, although have frequently been accompanied by a fine day and even some clear blue skies. The reserve has certainly looked very beautiful with every twig covered in a thick layer of hoar frost. It has also brought in a few wintering visitors looking for food.

### What to look for in winter

Even in winter there can be many things to look for around the reserve. Perhaps the most obvious has been the wealth of winter bird food in the form of berries of Hawthorn and Guelder Rose which have been attracting large numbers of the Thrush family, notably Blackbird, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Fieldfare and Redwing.

It's not just birds that you may want to keep your eyes open for. This time of the year is good to look for those 'non-flowering' plants such as fungi and mosses. The rather spectacular Candle-snuff or Stag's Horn fungi below, so called for its visual resemblance to miniature stags horns or snuffed out candle wicks, grows on dead wood and is particularly easy to see at this time of the year around the reserve.



### Refurbishment work finished

This autumn finally saw the refurbishment works completed on the field centre at the reserve funded by British Energy and the Lancashire Environmental Fund. Although minor works are still ongoing the centre is now fully functional again, with the first event a highly successful weekend bryophyte identification course in October. The photo below shows participants getting to grips with the finer details of mosses and liverworts under the microscope.



A programme of events is already being put together for 2009 and we are hoping to start increasing school bookings again in the new year as well.

# What's About

## Birds

Although we are well into winter a sighting of a late **Swallow** flying over the reserve on 16 November was a little reminder of the now distant summer. However, winter is always to be welcomed as an opportunity to see something different and the return of the regular winter visitors.

An abundance of berries has been providing an attraction for both **Redwing** and **Fieldfare**, with the latter seen in reasonable numbers during early December. They are usually rare outside the autumn passage period here so this year is unusual. Owls have provided some of the more recent highlights with **Short-eared Owl** near Red Nab on 30 October and a **Long-eared Owl** in the 'tank farm' on the 1 November. **Woodcock** are always an annual winter visitor on the edge of the wetland but was also recorded from the bushes by Red Nab on 24 November. **Kingfisher** have been seen regularly at Red Nab in the last few months but was also caught and ringed by the dipping pond at the beginning of December. **Nuthatch** is a reserve rarity here so a sighting on 3<sup>rd</sup> December was a new record for the year.

Although we are nearing the end of the BTO - British Energy Business Bird Challenge year, there is still time for new records so if you see any unusual or even common birds on the Heysham site we would welcome your records, so please drop a note into the nature reserve office.

## Other Records

Insect records have been restricted to moths over the last two months. **Feathered Thorn** has been the most frequent and often only species recently. Other species have included **December Moth** and **Mottled Umber** including the particularly fine specimen shown right.



Thanks go to the Heysham Bird Observatory team for providing the species records.

## What's On

4<sup>th</sup> January 2008

Working Party - Heysham Nature Reserve

1<sup>st</sup> February 2008

Working Party – Heysham Nature Reserve

1<sup>st</sup> March 2008

Working Party – Heysham Nature Reserve

If you would like to get involved with any aspect of the work here at Heysham we are always ready to welcome new volunteers. Working parties start at 10.00 and we meet in the nature reserve car park. Please bring waterproofs and a packed lunch if you intend staying all day

**For further information or to send in sightings please contact  
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