

SANDWICH BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY TRUST

**VIRTUAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR 2019, HELD (NOMINALLY) ON
SUNDAY AUGUST 9TH 2020 AT 2.00 P.M.**

Special note: in view of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, this Annual General Meeting of the Trust was conducted remotely by email.

1. **Members present and Apologies for absence:** not applicable.
2. **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 19th May 2019:** these had been made available to members on request and were accepted as accurate.
3. **Any matters arising from the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 19th May 2019:** none
4. **Chairman's Report for 2019:**

2019 was a remarkable year for the Observatory because of all the progress that was made in our work on the Restharrow Scrape Project. At the last Annual General Meeting in 2019 members were informed about the preparatory work that had already been done but you can now find a more detailed description in Sally Hunter's Vice-Chair's Report on what has happened since. There is also an outline of what we still need to do, especially to meet our commitments to the Heritage Fund. I do wish to mention, however, that one outcome of the successful bid for Lottery Funding was to make it possible in late 2019 for us to appoint an Assistant Warden, Becky Downey, who took up her post in January of this year. Even though she has been with us for over six months now, I wish to take this opportunity of formally welcoming her to the Observatory.

Although the Restharrow Scrape Project consumed much of the Trustees' and members' attention, dedication and hard work in 2019, other things were going on as well and it is to a selection of these that I wish to turn now. It appears from comments which were made at the annual conference of the Bird Observatories Council that Sandwich Bay probably undertakes more activities, both for its members and within the wider community, than any of the other Bird Observatories in the country and this is something that we can all be very proud of. Sue Bennett's Secretary's Report will give members a more detailed account. I wish, as always, to offer sincere thanks to all those members and Trustees without whose dedication none of this would be possible.

In 2019, we continued with our policy of strengthening links and collaborating with other local conservation groups. The presence of the RSPB Lydden Valley Warden at the Observatory has continued to work successfully, with much inter-change of ideas and mutual support going on. We were especially pleased to hear during the Spring of 2019 that the RSPB had released funding to start doing their planned habitat improvements on the Lydden Valley reserve, with results that are already proving very positive in terms of the bird and other wildlife of this important site.

We continue to have representation on such groups as the Pegwell and Sandwich Bay National Nature Reserve Steering Group; the Monks Wall Nature Reserve Management Committee; the Gazen Salts Reserve and the newly-formed Delf Trust Group. Other collaboration has included such diverse areas as contributing to the Dover District Council's work in drawing up their Green Infrastructure Policy; receiving Barn Owl boxes from the Lower Stour Partnership and assistance in a project with Countrywide Productions to make wildlife films for use in primary schools. We also have a contract with the Environment Agency, extending over several years, to monitor the migrant birds making use of the scrapes at Backsand. As in past years, we welcomed visiting groups from a range of local organisations, schools and colleges and had a successful internship for several months early in the year. The now almost annual ringing course in August was another success and several moth evenings over the summer months were well-attended.

Within the Observatory building itself, there has been much activity, often hidden and behind the scenes, but vital nonetheless. The Trustees have continued to review and improve our policies and practices, for example on Health and Safety issues and Risk Assessments. Audits in these areas are now done regularly, to ensure that we meet all requirements in looking after members and visitors alike. We have been able to up-grade some of the facilities in the residents' bedrooms and have plans for some more substantial changes by installing more *en suite* accommodation, to meet changing demands.

We have been steadily up-grading the computer provision within the building and this has aided the on-going process of digitising the masses of paper-based data that we have accrued over the years. Another successful initiative was the production of self-guided walk leaflets for members and visitors to use within the Observatory area. These have been well-received and thanks are due to the small team of dedicated members who took on this task, which involved a lot of field surveying and careful writing up, to ensure accuracy. Arrangements for the 200 Club were also much improved and better-publicised as an additional and relatively painless way of raising funds for the Observatory. On the subject of fund-raising, we have benefitted from several legacies over the year, including a substantial one from the estate of the late Vida Madell. This money was used to fund the splendid new bird hide at Restharrow Scrape, which has been named in her memory, and also the installation of our potentially exciting MOTUS equipment, which is designed to monitor over-flying electronically-tagged migrant birds. The Observatory has also received donations from family and friends in memory of others that have passed on and needless to say, we are always most appreciative of all such gifts.

I have to offer my sincere thanks to several Trustees who are standing down at this AGM. Vanessa Dent resigned during the course of the year and Sue Bennett, Nigel Hefford, Andy Keen and Simon Aubrey-Killen have all decided not to seek re-election. The work that all of these Trustees have done for the Observatory is beyond measure. Thanks are also due to *all* those members who continue to support the Observatory in so many different ways including those who submit their observations on the birds and other wildlife of the area. A special thank-you to our warden, Steffan, for the co-ordination of all of this data. New information is being discovered all the time, whether it be of new species for the area or up-dated details on the frequency and distribution of species that we know are already present.

I have to thank all the local landowners without whose co-operation our work would be much restricted. In particular, I would like to thank the officers of the Sandwich Bay Residents Ltd. for their helpfulness over car passes onto the Estate and also to Richard Daw, our neighbour at Old Downs, for his help on such issues as overflow parking at extra busy times, access issues, and much else besides.

Finally, although the impact on the Observatory of the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic falls outside the remit of this 2019 Report, it would be remiss of me not to mention it here. These are completely unprecedented times that we are all living through and there are still many problems and uncertainties to cope with, both as individuals and as an organisation. The Trustees have had to make a number of difficult decisions in order to protect our employees, the membership and visitors and this process is by no means over. On behalf of the Trustees, I would like to thank all members of the Observatory for their support and understanding during this time.

5. Secretary's Report for 2019.

Council meetings continued to be held on the second Monday of each month and minutes and agendas for these are held in a file at the back of the lecture hall. There are also Charity Commission papers, a copy of the Observatory's Constitution and copies of all the Observatory policy statements including the *Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Policy* which, along with the majority of policies, was revised in 2019.

All members are welcome to read these.

One new Trustee joined the Council: Simon Aubrey Killen.

Events

The Observatory participated in many external events including having a stall in the local Co-Op in January, at a *Deal With it* event in February and at a volunteer recruitment day in October at Sandwich Guildhall. Various courses were hosted throughout the year including a Solitary Bee course, a Bio-Blitz, a Ringing course and a B.T.O. ID course.

There was a visit from Hadlow students in February, from St Margaret's primary school for the third year running and from a KOS group in March. Other visiting groups included the RSPB, U3A & White Cliffs walking groups and the St Peter's Women's group who came for an evening walk looking at Orchids.

Open Day on 25th August had a record number of visitors and there was very favourable feedback on the ringing demonstrations, talks and the refreshments. A big thank you to all those who helped on the day.

On 26th October Charlotte Pestell conducted a guided walk of the new RSPB Lydden valley reserves. This was greatly appreciated by members and was an enjoyable afternoon where future plans were explained. Thank you Charlotte!

The guided walks to the new Scrape in late October were fully subscribed and feedback was very positive.

Moth nights were popular and were held in June, August and September. Thanks are due to Ian Hunter and Francis Solly and also to our Warden.

Many organisations used our premises for meetings and courses such as the Kent Wildlife Trust, Natural England, the Delf Trust and the Marine Archaeologists group.

The art group led by Kay Lunn continued to meet every Thursday afternoon and WEX and Phoenix sessions lead by Margaret Douet & Yvonne Cutt respectively were held on the last Saturday of the month.

Holidays

There was a trip to Wales including RSPB Conwy in January, a two day visit to Minsmere in April, to the Ebro delta and Spanish Pyrenees also in April, a day trip to Marquenterre in May and a visit to the Bird Fair in August. Finally, in October a trip went to the Isles of Scilly for the fifth year running.

All of these were very successful and immensely enjoyable! Thank you to both Mike Briggs and Ken Chapman.

A Sandwich Bay Bird Tours trip to Morocco in September also generated additional funds as each participant made a contribution to the Observatory.

Together these holidays made £5600 for Observatory funds.

Fund Raising

The Clubs and Fund Raising team lead by Vanessa Dent met on a regular basis throughout the year.

Quiz nights continued to be enjoyable and popular fund raising events. These were held in January, April, October and for the first time a Christmas Quiz in December. A special thank you to Margaret Douet and Peter Dean for hosting.

There were RHS fundraising special events through the year including a Grove Ferry boat trip on 14th May, a Plant Sale on 26th May and also a Butterfly Walk guided by Heather Willis on Bonsai Bank.

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Library.

The library has over 1000 books and pamphlets. Titles added to stock in 2019 include the ***Atlas of Britain and Ireland's Larger Moths***, ***The Hedgehog*** which the author Pat Morris donated, ***Field Guide to the Ladybirds of Great Britain and Ireland***, and the ***Birds of Israel by Uzi Paz***.

The catalogue is on our web site thanks to Becky Johnson.

We were lucky enough to have many valuable donations over the year although we will soon need a bigger space for our increasing book stock. Digitisation of records has freed up some space.

The library room is kept locked because it holds valuable stock and records but if anyone who hasn't seen the library would like to take a look please see me or any of the trustees.

Shop

The Shop volunteers play an important welcoming role, providing information and in the recruitment of new members. Bird seed and confectionary and drinks continue to be best sellers. I'm not sure how it happened but the team's remit also now involves putting up the Christmas decorations. The shop contributed approximately £3730 over the year to funds.

The Walks leaflets produced by Nigel Hefford and Peter Harrison which are on sale in the shop have proved invaluable.

Thanks are due to all the shop volunteers who give up time each week to work in the shop. Sue Morton who has been a volunteer for over 20 years will not be doing the Monday morning slot any more. We are especially grateful to her for long contribution in provisioning the shop and also to another valued volunteer, Maurice Wright, who is giving up the Thursday morning slot. We hope to see them both at the Observatory on a regular basis in the future.

Finally, at the very end of the year a few of us faced the onslaught of a big office tidy up to accommodate the Observatory's new Assistant Warden. The interviews for the latter post were held in October where Becky Downey was subsequently appointed.

As I am standing down as Secretary this year I would like to thank all my fellow Trustees and Volunteers for all the time they dedicate to the work of the Observatory and for the tremendous achievement of purchasing Restharrow Scrape thereby ensuring its future as a valued wildlife habitat. I hope to continue as a volunteer.

6. Vice-Chair's Report on Restharrow Scrape project 2019-2020

Following on from the information I gave last year here is an update on what has been achieved this year:

- Acknowledge Heritage Lottery funding on site, online and in all activities. Signage is in place at the Reserve.
- Purchase the 12.5 acre wildlife site which is currently held on lease. Achieved 24 May 2019
- Recruit an assistant warden. Becky Downey in post on 1 January 2020
- Recruit new volunteers to manage the hide and engage visitors. A few people recruited and DBS checked
- Install a second wildlife hide and carry out repair and conservation work to the site. Groundworks completed between 19 September and 15 October 2019. Fully accessible Vida Madell hide designed and erected 19 November 2019. Paths completed February 2020. Parking Bays completed March 2020. The conservation team refurbished the old Graham Crick hide while the site was closed to visitors during the major works.
- Redesign procedures for monitoring, recording, and analysing wildlife. Steffan has designed some new ways to monitor the breeding birds on the Restharrow Scrape Reserve and has updated several other recording methods more generally.
- Conduct audit of staff and volunteer skills and training needs, and produce a training plan.
We have held some volunteer training events and are in the process of offering more training opportunities to staff and volunteers
- Commence outreach work with local schools/youth/other community groups. Becky has already made contact with both Primary and Secondary schools. She has produced some learning and engagement materials for a variety of audiences.
- Engage with Mencap and other users to identify needs that can be met through the project.
Bo Beolens and Russell Miles helped us design the new hide to be as fully accessible as possible.
- Install interpretation boards; audio posts, and publicise reopening of the site.
The interpretation boards are in place on the reserve and at the field centre. The audio post is ready to be installed with thanks to Martin and Sara Sutherland for their input on this.
We planned the re-opening for 3rd April 2020.

The management group consisting of the officers of the trust together with Bill Martin and Roger Jones has met monthly to ensure all the work is on track across all the work streams. This will continue at a slower pace throughout the rest of the 3 year project period now that all the major infrastructure work is complete.

Many people were involved with the intensive level of work completed during 2019 and the early part of 2020.

Covid-19 meant that some of the work is not as complete as we would have hoped however we have looked at the plans and decided that all will still be completed during the original time-frame. Becky Downey has produced some virtual engagement and learning materials during this period.

We were very fortunate to be gifted a legacy by the late Vida Madell who was a member of the Bird Observatory for many years. She had a great interest in wildlife, conservation and research (she was

a member of the ringing group). This meant we could achieve our dream of a fully-accessible hide which would not have been possible in the original budget.

The total cost of the three-year Restharrow Scrape Development Project was planned to be £323,600. By the end of 2018 we had secured £101,823 for the project through fundraising and grants. During 2019 this increased to £263,632 including the first two tranches of money from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. At the end of 2019 the amount to be provided from our Trust reserves was £59,968 (the Trustees had provisionally allocated up to £90,000) and in fact at the time of writing is just over £41,000.

So:

We are well on the way to meeting the outcomes we agreed with the National Lottery Heritage Fund:

- Heritage will be in better condition – heritage in this case is the Restharrow Scrape Reserve
- Heritage will be better interpreted and explained
- Heritage will be identified/recorded
- People will have developed skills – this includes volunteers and staff
- People will have learnt about heritage – this will include all those engaged by our outreach work
- People will have volunteered time
- Our organisation will be more resilient – through greater engagement with more people visiting, being involved in our outreach work and volunteering.

Thank you to the many people who have helped in the funding, planning, management and execution of this project so far.

You can still join in through adopting a plot or donating money or materials (e.g. we are looking for no longer needed field guides to place in the hides), volunteering for any of the physical work, supporting the outreach work through contacts or volunteering etc.

We are always keen to hear of any other ideas of how you would like to help.

Sally Hunter July 2020

7. Treasurer's Report for 2019.

I am pleased to report that 2019 was another strong year for the Observatory.

The Accounts attached exclude the successful fund-raising and also the expenditure for the Restharrow Scrape Project. These are reported by Sally Hunter for this AGM.

Income in 2019 was significantly higher than 2018. This was largely due to the donation to the Observatory of a plot of land, which is recorded as such, although, of

course, no cash changed hands. Most income headings were similar to, or higher than, the previous year. Leaving aside the land donation, income was £16,000 more than 2018. The Open Day (including the raffle) was particularly successful. Motus costs, financed by a bequest, appear for the first time. There is nearly a full year of income for rented space from the RSPB. Wood Boards, made by Andy Keen, were a successful new income category.

Expenditure in total was about £2,000 less than last year. Salaries were lower as there was only one warden during the year. Building costs and Office Expenses taken together were slightly more than 2018.

In particular over £3,000 was saved by changing the printer of the Annual Report.

As at 31 December 2019 Cash at bank totalled £200,000.

The trustees reviewed the Financial Reserves policy during the year. The policy is now to hold £75,000 in cash.

I would be happy to answer any questions. Please contact me via treasurer@sbbot.org.uk

SANDWICH BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY TRUST 2019 year

<u>Income</u>	£.p	£.p	<u>Expenditure</u>	£.p	£.p
Membership Fees Received	19,702.50		Salaries (	19,432.81)	less Toll Fees
Employer's NI	-				1,500.00
					21,202.50
Gift Aid tax reclaim	<u>6,136.25</u>	6,136.25	Employer's Pension	(268.11)	(
					19,700.92)
Hostel receipts	18,428.40				
Hire of Meeting Rooms	<u>275.00</u>	18,703.40	Building Costs		
Tea / coffee			Oil	(3,761.93)	
Received	1,421.59		Electricity	(1,853.96)	
Costs	(778.98)	642.61	Insurance	(
				3,926.83)	
Donations	<u> </u>	106,173.24	Maintenance	(
Income from Clubs Received	9,638.72			5,962.79)	

	Costs	(1,846.40)	7,792.32	Water	(	1,307.84)
Bee Course	Received	<u>1,624.00</u>		Rates	(	1,433.27)
	Costs	(1,000.00)	624.00	Waste	(	524.16)
Holidays/Coach trips	Received	39,847.20		Cleaner	(	1,440.00)
	Costs		3,950.40	Housekeeping	(	1,238.33)
Open Day	Received	<u>(35,896.80)</u>			(	21,449.11)
	Received	1,706.76				
	Costs	(252.74)	1,454.02	Office Expenses		
Open Day Raffle	Received	<u>2,454.00</u>		Office Exps	(	3,667.06)
	Costs	<u>(741.72)</u>	1,712.28	Telephone	(	402.57)
Wine & Wisdoms	Received	956.10		Postage	(	811.86)
	Costs	<u>-</u>	956.10	Printing	(	80.40)
Surveys			3,750.00	Subscriptions / Sponsorshi	(	451.30)
In Focus commission			687.67	Computers/WEB	(	3,317.84)
Plant sale			418.65		(	8,731.03)
Talks			288.00	Travel Expenses	(	5,386.21)
RPA Grant		9,169.42		Audit & Legal	(	1,050.00)
Professional Advice	(	614.94)	8,554.48	Miscellaneous	(	654.43)
Sale of eqpt	Received	<u>25.00</u>		Books for library		11.00
	Costs	<u>-</u>	25.00	Advertising		100.00
200 Club Income	2,038.00	Tim Garland Award		- Prizes (980.00)	1,058.00	Annual
		Report (2,380.00)				
Shop contribution Income		<u>10,891.00</u>		less Sales		42.75
	Purchases	(7,042.32)		Newsletters	(	370.74)
					(	2,707.99)
Eqpt		<u>-</u>	3,848.68	Vehicle Costs	(	176.00)
Bank Interest received			101.23	Maintenance	(	1,780.85)
Ringing donations / BTO rebate			140.00	Road Fund Tx	(	111.08)
Wood Boards			330.00	Insurance	(	450.64)
					(	2,518.57)
Solar Power Income			4,016.75	Reserves & Ringing Rents	(	6,799.55)

MOTUS		1,559.00		IncomeTools / M/ce	
	(570.49)	<u>(1,559.00)</u>			
		1,579.80			
	Expenditure	<u>(1,051.37)</u>	528.43		
	(723.23)	3,860.80		0.00	Reserves
		<u>0.00</u>	3,860.80		<u> </u>
Ringling Course	Income	<u>196,954.81</u>		Water Rates	<u>(72,161.48)</u>
	(104.06)				<u>124,793.3</u>
		ExpenditureFeeding/Nestb			(92.00)
RSPB Rental Income		IncomeMothling Exps			(1.21)
		ExpenditureRingling			(1,783.68)
		(10,074.22)			
Total Income	Total Expenditure				
			Trading Surplus		
			Depreciation	Building	(8,513.00)
			Annual 2019	Freehold Improvements	<u>(4,694.00)</u>
					<u>111,586.3</u>
			Net Income after Depre	Surplus	

8. Warden's Report for 2019.

How quick does a year come round? My first year in charge has been eventful with the Restharrow Scrape Project rightly taking centre-stage. It's been one of those moments in SBBOT history that make you think, we were there when that happened, we did this. Later in the report Sally Hunter explains all about it in more detail as she has led the project brilliantly from its inception.

January began with good numbers of Water Pipits and Short-eared Owls whilst a small flock of overwintering Pink-footed Geese was unusual. Mid-February saw the usual return of return of Shelducks, Ringed Plovers, Coots, and Avocets back to their breeding areas. There was a record arrival of Garganey at the end of March with at least 24 birds on the 28th. Even more bizarrely, a Night-heron was sound-recorded flying over us at night. RSPB staff became much more noticeable at the Observatory as we agreed a three-year contract with them to share our office space. During this time we also ran trips to North Wales and Islay, attended the Bird Observatory Council meeting in Thetford, Royal St George's Greenkeeping Course, and ran Bird Identification and Disturbance Sessions in conjunction with Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT). Greg Lee arrived as a volunteer in early Spring and spent three months with us learning the ropes at an Observatory. His eager eyes were well-received and he contributed plenty of bird, moth, and bat sightings during his stay with us.

In April, the Observatory began a five-year contract with the Environment Agency monitoring the birdlife on New Downs, a new crow trap was built, and there were meetings regarding MOTUS and Kent Ornithological Society records. The accommodation was very busy but Dawn Stockley, who joined us as Field Centre Manager in late 2018, was up to the task and has since proved to be a valuable member of our team. Good numbers of Sand Martins were recorded, a Kentish Plover was present on the 3rd, and followed by a White Stork and a run of Cattle Egrets on the 9th, 18th, 21st, and 22nd, another Kentish Plover on the 24th, and regular sightings of Spoonbills and Ring Ouzels. A couple of Red-rumped Swallows on the 1st was a good start to May and it continued with another two Kentish Plovers, three Golden Orioles, two Honey-buzzards, singles of Montagu's Harrier, Black Kite, Purple Heron, and Temminck's Stint, plus good movements of Little Tern and Red Kite. The AGM was a great success as were our guided river trips at Grove Ferry and the day out across the Channel at Parc du Marquenterre.

A Quail on 1st June and a Hoopoe on the 3rd were the last notable spring migrants but further avian highlights came in the form of Black-headed Gulls and Egyptian Geese breeding on Restharrow Scrape for the first time. A juvenile Siskin trapped on the 11th was certainly interesting too, it must've bred somewhere not too far away. As

the weather heated up so did the invertebrate records too with Speckled Footman and Currant Clearwing appearing, Ringlets seemingly cemented themselves as a resident in the Recording Area, whilst our first independent Bee Identification Course run with Steven Falk was an overwhelming success.

Autumn began picking up slowly during July and by the end of the month Waders, Terns, and Warblers were abundant. A Cattle Egret on Worth on the 23rd was unseasonal. There was good productivity of nesting Turtle Doves on Worth and Cetti's Warbler was confirmed to have bred on the Estate for the first time. A few Garganey began appearing followed by impressive numbers of Wood Sandpipers. The contents of the moth trap were fantastic too with Splendid Brocade, Dewick's Plusia, Dark Crimson Underwing, Shining Marbled, Pale Shoulder, Marbled Clover, Great Brocade, Dusky Hook-tip, and Mocha all making an appearance. Meanwhile the discovery of Dainty Damselfly at a private site was one of the biggest finds of the year.

In August it was great to have regular sightings of Pied and Spotted Flycatchers, plus a few Wood Warblers, and we ran another excellent Ringing Course. A mega emergence of butterflies saw 503 Red Admirals counted on the 7th and 285 Painted Ladies on the 8th, whilst there were sightings of Southern Migrant Hawk for the second year in succession. The nocturnal sound-recording picked up more surprises near the end of the month with Ortolan Bunting on the 26th and then Dotterel the following night. A Honey-buzzard flew over on the 29th.

Later on, in September the winds switched and seemed to hamper visible migration. Despite this a Wryneck was ringed on the 9th and a super flock of 10,000 Swallows was observed coming into roost overnight on the 12th. Once again there were sizable arrivals of Blackcaps, and later Chiffchaffs, which are now becoming standard events in the Sandwich Bay calendar. Meanwhile a White Stork wading around the saltmarsh in Pegwell Bay on the 29th was from the recent Knepp release scheme. During the month we also advertised for an Assistant Warden to lead on the outreach and interpretation side of the Restharrow Scrape Project and help with Observatory activities. Rebecca Downey impressed in interviews and was appointed at the end of the year.

October started well with Sabine's Gull and Purple Sandpiper amongst a big Brent movement on the 2nd, followed by a flurry of late Turtle Doves. One of the more intriguing events of the autumn was the prolonged Tit passage through the Recording Area. At least 167 Blue Tits and 110 Long-tailed Tits coasted through the area on the 3rd, with only our ninth ever Nuthatch the same day. Considerable falls of Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps became the norm, with hundreds bouncing from bush-to-bush, and once again there were excellent numbers of Yellow-browed Warblers.

In November there were sporadic sightings of Little Gull, Slavonian Grebe, Mandarin, and Hen Harrier throughout the month. Three Cranes flew past offshore on the 2nd and two Bean Geese went over on the 16th. A run of Yellow-legged and Caspian Gulls on the new Restharrow Scrape were well-received. Three Cattle Egrets appeared on the 25th and were joined by a Glossy Ibis the next day. The Ibis toured around Worth for a week or so before moving on, but the Egrets remained until the end of the year. Insect news was brought to a climax with the discovery of a Vagrant Emperor on the 17th. This was the first SBBOT record of this migratory dragonfly and became our 31st species of Odonata, making us surely the most bio-diverse area in the UK for this taxonomic group. The year ended once again with up to 3,000 Cormorants offshore and good numbers of wintering Short-eared Owls, Water Pipits, and Snow Buntings.

It seems a shame that after all these years I still have to report ongoing disturbance on the Sandwich and Pegwell Bay NNR. The cumulative effect of dog walkers, drones, kite surfers, joggers, bait-diggers, and paragliders continue to have a detrimental effect on the wildlife of the area. It is unfortunate to have to relay the ongoing declines in many species, particularly non-passerines for which Sandwich and Pegwell Bay is so important. In the autumn a Public Service Protection Order was placed upon Sandwich Bay beach by Dover District Council in an attempt to restrict the effect of dog disturbance on the wildlife, you can see their new signage along the beach. This is a small step in the right direction and we await to see the results of this work. I have also worked in conjunction with the KWT on many occasions during the year as part of an ongoing project educating volunteers on bird identification so they can monitor the birds and disturbance in our protected area.

As well as our own wetland development the nearby RSPB Lydden Valley continues to flourish. With their recent £1.3 million funding they have created a series of scrapes and pools and produced the largest wetland in South East Britain. Combining this work, SBBOT's own Restharrow Scrape developments, Dick Daws' farmland scrapes, the expansion of Ham Fen by KWT, the creation of pools on New Downs by the Environment Agency, the new dune-slacks created on Royal St George's, Prince's, and Royal Cinque Ports Golf Courses, with the expanse of Pegwell Bay, we now have a phenomenal landscape-scale approach to wetland bird conservation. The future looks bright for Sandwich Bay.

Thanks as always to all the trustees and volunteers for all their help and advice throughout the season. Thank you to Greenwich University for supplying microscopes for the Bee Identification course, John and Gill Brook for their

Odonata monitoring and knowledge, and Sandwich Bay Estate Residents for supporting the work of the Observatory.

9. Ringling Report for 2019.

Despite regular inclement conditions 6,609 birds of 73 species were ringed in 2019.

We continue to run projects on House Sparrows and Collared Doves as part of the national Retrapping Adults for Survival project. We also contributed data to a national study on the changing moult strategy of Blue Tits.

Early in the year the observatory Crow Trap was resited to make room for the RSPB to install a container for their equipment. They provided the concrete for the new trap base.

One of our team, John Tomlinson, applied for and received a permit upgrade from T to C.

We were sad to hear the news that one of our long-term members, Vida Maddell, had passed away. Due to a generous bequest from her estate we have been able to install two aerals and a monitor as part of an international project using radio telemetry to track migrant birds and bats.

Ian Hunter July 2020

10. Election of Officers and Trustees for 2020 – 2021.

The following Trustees were standing down: Simon Aubrey-Killen; Sue Bennett; Andy Keen and Nigel Hefford. Vanessa Dent resigned during the course of the year.

The following Trustees were willing to continue in post: Ken Chapman (Chair); Sally Hunter (Vice-Chair); Bob Dean (Treasurer); John Buckingham; Peter Dean; Becky Johnson; Eugene Hood; Ian Hunter; Nick Smith.

The following members were willing to stand as new Trustees: Sharon Irvine; Phil Poole; Helena Daly and Angela Weaving.

The above- named persons were therefore elected or re-elected to the Council of Trustees *en bloc*.

11. Any Other Business: none.