

# **Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust**

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## **SECRETARY'S REPORT ON THE YEAR 2019 FOR THE 'VIRTUAL' ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 2020**

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.

Sue Bennett

July 2020