



The following is a summary by Officers and members with specific responsibilities, setting out the Society's achievements during 2019 under the heading of the relevant Committee where applicable.

The objectives of the Society and the Strategies for achieving them can be seen in the Trustees' report and on our website.

(<https://www.sos.org.uk/about-the-sos>)

Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS)

Council

At the 2019 AGM; Alison Giacomelli and Sue Walsh retired from Council; Mya Bambrick and Jon Curson were elected onto Council; and Ted Merrikin was elected as Treasurer. At the first meeting of Council in May, Mike Russell was elected as Chair. Graeme Lyons retired from Council in November.

Committees

The work of Council is hugely supported by the work of the Society's two main committees (within which there are various sub-committees) whose membership at 31 December 2019 was as follows (an * denotes that the committee member is also an elected member of Council):

Scientific Committee Mark Mallalieu* (Chair), Clare Buckle (Secretary), Dr Richard Black*, Dave Boddington, Richard Cowser*, Dr Helen Crabtree, John Hobson, Dr John Newnham, Alan Perry*, Dr Peter Plant*, Dr Ken Smith, Dr Barrie Watson.

Records Committee Mark Mallalieu* (Recorder), Martin Orchard-Webb (Assistant Recorder), Bola Akinola, Chris Ball, Derek Barber, Ian Barnard, David Campbell, Jake Everitt, Bernie Forbes, Simon Linington, Alan Parker and Mike Scott-Ham.

Bird Report Dr Peter Plant* (Editor) supported by Editorial Team; Chris Barfield, Joanne Chattaway, Luke Dray, John Hobson, Paul James, Mark Mallalieu*, Dr John Newnham.

Membership & Publicity Committee Val Bentley (Chair), Chris Brown, Anthony Holden* (Newsletter Editor), Tim Squire (Conference Organiser), John Trowell (Membership Secretary), Audrey Wende, Dr Mark (D M) Wright (Outings Organiser), Rob Yarham* (Press and Publicity Officer)

Outings/Programme Committee Dr Mark (D M) Wright (Outings Organiser), Bernie Forbes, Audrey Wende

To all those who have retired from Council and the Society's committees during 2019, our very sincere thanks for all your hard work and efforts.

Treasurer's Report

Sussex Ornithological Society had a financially positive year in 2019. Income from members' subscriptions, legacies, donations and Gift Aid was £49,301. The Society is extremely grateful to members for all donations received, and all monies given to the Society will be used to support conservation projects. This is because our subscription income covers the cost of member services and administration. We are particularly grateful for the legacies left to the Society by individuals remembering SOS in their wills.

During the year, the Society donated a total of £13,941 for conservation projects. We gave the RSPB £8,650 for the purchase of a tractor mounted rotavator; we contributed £500 towards the Peregrine project at Chichester Cathedral, and gave £1,391 to Barn Owl and Swift conservation.

From the Avifauna Fund, we awarded funds to the following projects: Brighton & Hove House Sparrows was given £1,000 for year three of this deserving project; The Last Song of the Nightingale, a conservation documentary detailing the plight of this iconic song bird, was awarded £1,000; and £1,400 was awarded to Matt Kirk for his exciting study of the breeding activity and significant population of Common Redstarts in Pippingford Park Estate, part of the wider Ashdown Forest Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI).

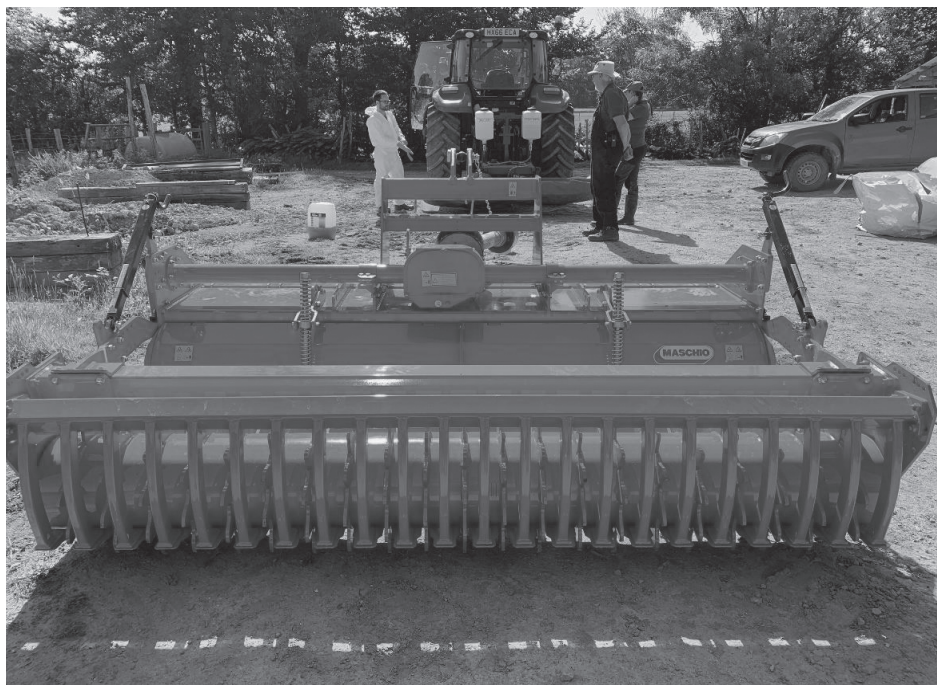
Thank you to all members (circa 1,000) who renew their Society membership by standing order, saving Adrian Podmore (subscriptions officer) much time and effort.

Finally, a few facts for you to consider - the Society has donated **£355,074** to deserving projects since 1972.

Gift Aid reclaimed over the years is **£65,072**.

The SOS Bird Race since 2012 has raised an amazing **£27,732** including Gift Aid, thus enabling the Society to contribute to even more deserving conservation projects in Sussex.

Ted Merrikin Treasurer



Pulborough's rotavator is raring to go

Thanks to SOS support, Pulborough Brooks took delivery of their new rotavator last week, much to the delight of the reserve team. With trained staff and a busy summer work programme the team are keen to get out and about with it as soon as possible. Initially the rotavator will be used to create bare ground and muddy edges to ensure sufficient wader feeding sites. Following this, during the winter months it will be used to create scrapes down on the Brooks to ensure a healthy invertebrate population for the 2020 breeding season.

The ability to open-up areas of Pulborough Brooks and Amberley Wildbrooks, without having to rely on outside contractors, represents a real step-change in the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) ability to manage these sites for wildlife both now, and for its 20-year projected lifetime.

Scientific Committee

Mark Mallalieu was re-elected as Chair of Scientific Committee at the April meeting. With all other posts currently filled there were no personnel changes in 2019.

During 2019 species surveys of Willow Tit and Turtle Dove were organised. Unfortunately, no Willow Tits were found and the status of Turtle Dove in the county continues to be precarious. The Committee is grateful to the Surveys and Projects Officer, Richard Black and to Ken Smith for their work in organising these important surveys.

In September the inaugural SOS Fieldworkers' Meeting took place at Adastra Hall in Hassocks and included a mixture of short and longer talks about the Society's survey programme, bird recording and other projects, as well as birding in Sussex more generally. It was attended by 86 people including non-SOS Members and was very well received. Another Fieldworkers' Meeting will be held in 2020 and both Scientific Committee and Council are grateful to Ken and Linda Smith for introducing the Meeting to the SOS calendar and their work in organising such an excellent and well-run event.

It was a busy year once more for the Conservation Officer, Richard Cowser, and his team. Their work involves monitoring planning applications and taking action where plans could adversely impact upon birds. In 2019 they responded to several planning applications including; proposals for housing developments at Pagham, options for the A27 bypass at Arundel, and developments at Monks Farm in Shoreham. In addition, Richard and his team continue to work on for proposals for new Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) having already developed criteria for assessing potential sites. The Scientific Committee and Council are grateful to Richard and the Conservation Team for this important work.

John Newnham continued his hard work to ensure that bird records in Sussex are added to the Society's database as comprehensively and accurately as possible; Helen Crabtree continued her important work as BTO representative helping, for example, to ensure that an impressive number of Breeding Birds Surveys were again carried out. Scientific Committee and Council are grateful to them for this contribution.

Clare Buckle, Secretary to Scientific Committee

Archives

There have been no major changes to the archive over the past year. The electronic archive continues to be updated on a regular basis with the minutes of Council meetings and those of the various committees, together with their relevant supporting documents. Newsletters and the Annual Report and accounts are also included in the archive.

The paper archive, which includes most of the Society's documents prior to 2007, remains at the West Sussex County Record Office in Chichester, where they can be viewed by making an appointment direct. To ensure

compliance with the Data Protection Act, records of members and their details (such as addresses etc.) are only held in relation to archived rare bird descriptions held in the Society's archive, and not for any other reason.

Mark (CMV) Wright, Archivist

Conservation

With 145,000 new houses planned to be built in the 20 years up to 2035 across Sussex, the pace of development across the county shows no sign of abating. Our aim remains to work with Local Planners to try and ensure that key sites that are important for Sussex birds are not harmed by development, and that, where possible, we secure protection for key sites that do not already enjoy some form of conservation protection.

To this end, we spoke at the Public Examinations of the Local Plans for Lewes – Eastbourne and Wealden District Councils. On the former we spoke against further development of the E1 site on the Tide Mill Local Wildlife Site (LWS) at Newhaven. Perhaps unsurprisingly (as the land is owned by Newhaven Port) the Inspector ruled that this land should be allocated for port-related development, but he accepted arguments that this should be conditional on full mitigation being provided elsewhere in the area, and, most pleasingly, he stated that *"time must be allowed for its establishment before any development occurs, so that no net loss of biodiversity occurs at any time"* which is something that we pressed for. At the public hearing on the Wealden Local Plan there was much discussion about Ashdown Forest, and the Inspector's Report is expected soon. We are working with Wealden DC who will be using levies on developers to fund visitor and dog wardening management activities in the Forest. Dartford Warbler and Nightjar are the two species that are cited in the designation of the Forest as a Special Protection Area for birds, but our concern is that numbers of the former species are much lower than they should be. Through Wealden we hope to influence habitat improvements and to monitor the populations of both species.

We have done some extensive work with Shoreham District Ornithological Society (SDOS) to provide sample records of the 106 species of birds that have used Goring Gap over the last ten years, in order to provide irrefutable evidence of the importance of this site for birds, which justifies its being designated as a new LWS. We have had to ensure that we have several records of each species showing not only six-figure grid references, but that the records also include notes making it clear that the species were using the site rather than just flying across it.

Unfortunately, the owners of New Drayton House Gravel Pits at Chichester have not allowed this site to be surveyed as a candidate LWS although it meets the designation criteria because of its importance for birds. However, Chichester DC have supported our efforts for it to be protected, and they intend to modify one of their proposed wildlife corridors so as to incorporate this site into a wildlife corridor in their Local Plan, which should give it a measure of protection. Their Local Plan will go for public

examination in 2020, as will the Worthing Local Plan and the Crawley Local Plan.

In Eastbourne a very large new LWS (Eastbourne Wetland Park LWS) is in the process of being formalised. This will include West Rise Marsh as well as Shinewater and Southbourne Lakes; Willingdon Levels, Eastbourne Levels and the Golfing Park. Unfortunately, Eastbourne BC have published for public comment a "direction of travel" plan which suggests that some housing gets built on this new LWS. We will be objecting to this. We therefore urgently require records with six-figure grid references of all birds that you see anywhere on this site, especially away from the hot spots.

Other activities partaken throughout 2019 have included:

- Organisation of a survey to find where wintering Brent Geese at Pagham forage. In winter 2018-19 their main foraging ground was on the site of the proposed development along Pagham Road, and thanks to local volunteers we collected nearly 100 records of them foraging there. Notably, they hardly used the proposed mitigation site. Recording and surveying are continuing in the current winter. It is a condition of the Pagham Road development being allowed to proceed that full mitigation is provided, and we will be arguing that the proof of that will be evidence that the Brent Geese regularly use the mitigation site.
- Initiation of a dialogue with RSPB about the reasons for the disappointing numbers of birds at Ferry Pool.
- Engagement in discussions with the developer to ensure that a proposed Solar Farm along Lidsey Rife does not adversely affect breeding waders.
- Liaison with Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) and Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) in responding to the Crawley Local Plan where we are concerned that Crawley overspill will increasingly occur onto the east side of the M23 in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). We identified several key species that could be put at risk.
- Working through the Pevensey Level Catchment Partnership to try and ensure that increased monitoring of water quality takes place in the Horse Eye Level catchment area, which will bear the brunt of the many new developments around Hailsham.
- Responding to West Sussex's Soft Sand review and objecting to the identification of The Severals, near Midhurst, as a potential site for sand extraction, as Nightjars nest there.

I am extremely grateful to the SOS Conservation Team who have supported all the above work during 2019. Without their efforts and support we would not have been able to cover so much ground.

Richard Cowser, Conservation Officer

Conservation Management

The Society has management responsibility for the following two sites:

Charleston Reedbed

A fairly disastrous start to the conservation work in the Reedbed was not a good omen for the rest of the year. We were flooded from 10th March and access was only safely achieved on 28th April. This meant that both the annual SOS work party and the volunteer work party from the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) had to be cancelled. These could not then be re-scheduled as the breeding season had commenced.

During the summer and at all other times when access was possible and disturbance was deemed not to be a problem, the ringing group made a real effort with a large block of Blackthorn, thinning it out and reducing the height. Willow was also coppiced where necessary. Paths were cleared and walkways repaired. Once again, there was very little invasive balsam found, so we are definitely winning the war on it.

In the autumn, water started to rise in the valley and, due to the conditions another work party from the SDNPA had to be cancelled on the 17th October. By the time we reached the 22nd, most of the valley was underwater and this lasted until about the 20th November. Access was then possible but only briefly, and after a tidy up of washed away boardwalks and general damage the valley then re-flooded and remained so into December. The SSSI suffered through lack of dredging at the river mouth. The effect of these floods over the last few years has been detrimental to wildlife in the Reedbed, with many small mammals rarely or no longer sighted, grass snake numbers are down, and dragonflies were notably down in numbers this summer and autumn.

So, a very bad year for the management work. I would like to thank the ringing group for all their efforts in managing the site and of course to Richard Brown, the landowner, for allowing the SOS to manage this invaluable site.

Tim Parmenter

New Lake/Ivy Lake Reedbed

The situation remains as for 2018 where we reported that the presence of a thriving cormorant colony meant that there was no attempt at breeding by Common Tern, and this SOS managed Nature Reserve continues to attract good numbers of wintering waterfowl.

Richard Cowser, Conservation Officer

Database

During the year, the Society added almost 340K records for 2018 to its database, an increase of approximately 6% on 2017. Around 60% of these came from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)'s BirdTrack recording

system. More details of the breakdown of the 2018 records are contained in the 71st Sussex Bird Report. The 2018 records [less Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), and those marked confidential] that the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC) had not already received directly were copied to them.

The Society's multi-user online database CoBRA2 (C2) continues to function very well and is still evolving as experience of using it prompts further developments. During 2019 the BTO introduced a new BirdTrack system and changes were required to enable BirdTrack records to be more easily uploaded to C2.

The writing teams for The Sussex Bird Report (SxBR) again successfully extracted their own species data from the database. Despite the extensive automated record checking programmed into the new database, the SxBR writing team were again busy corresponding with observers about records requiring investigation. Other tasks, such as answering further requests for data, have also been completed by the Society's Database Manager, Dr John Newnham.

Chris Brown, the Society's Webmaster, and his colleague Andy Lawrence, have continued to be very responsive to changes required to the database, and Council remains extremely grateful to John for his ongoing work on database matters, and to Chris and Andy for the continuing work they are undertaking in adding new features to CoBRA2.

Clare Buckle, Secretary to Scientific Committee

Records

A total of 262 species was recorded in 2018, compared to 256 in 2017. Descriptions were provided in relation to 211 records of scarce or rare species and subspecies, of which 178 were accepted by the SOS Records Committee (SOSRC) and ten by the British Birds Rarities Committee. Data were forwarded to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, which publishes its annual report in *British Birds*. Data were also provided for inclusion in the annual scarce migrants report in the same journal.

There were 15-19 Goshawk territories in 2018 with at least seven successful pairs, further evidence of the species' rapid increase in the county. Three pairs of Marsh Harriers bred successfully, another promising sign. Three pairs of Stone-curlews were located with chicks hatched by two of these, and at least one young fledging successfully. The 96 pairs of Avocets had mixed success, with the 36 pairs at Medmerry doing best, producing 30 young. At Rye Hbr, about 320 pairs of Sandwich Terns fledged c.200 young, whilst at Pagham Hbr, 18 young fledged from 29 pairs. Also, at Pagham Hbr, 20 pairs of Little Terns produced 13 young. Confirmed or probable breeding Peregrines were found at 34 sites. The first county survey of Firecrests gave a population estimate of c.700 and possibly up to 1000 territories.

Two new species were added to the Sussex list in 2018: a Royal Tern at Pagham Hbr on 19 and 20 June and a Pallid Swift at Church Norton on 13

October. Other outstanding rarities in 2018 included a Daurian or Turkestan Shrike at Birling Gap on 2 November and a splendid array of rare waders, with Rye Hbr hosting a Terek Sandpiper on 18 and 19 May and a Broad-billed Sandpiper on 24 May. In the autumn, a Semipalmated Sandpiper was at Cuckmere Haven on 4 September, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper at Scotney GP from 24 September to 1 October, a Lesser Yellowlegs at The Midrips on 3 and 4 November and a White-rumped Sandpiper at Pulborough Brooks from 8 to 13 December. Seawatching produced a Surf Scoter at Splash Point (Seaford) on 22 April and a Cory's Shearwater at Selsey Bill on 16 June. Rare passerines in the spring included a Savi's Warbler at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) between 8 and 11 April and a Little Bunting at Beachy Head on 22 April. In the autumn there was a Tawny Pipit at Beachy Head on 17 September and in winter, a Hume's Warbler at Newhaven from 27 Dec into 2019.

I am as ever most grateful to the members of the SOSRC who assess records of scarce and rare species or subspecies, and to the Assistant Recorder. The team continued to ensure that this part of the Society's work is carried out diligently and efficiently. The three volunteers who process paper records for the database provided much-appreciated inputs; very few observers now submit paper records, so this work is decreasing. John Newnham again gave a great deal of support for the Recorder's work and I am most grateful to him.

Mark Mallalieu, Recorder

Species Action **Barn Owls**

A review of survey methods for the Scientific Committee recommended that Barn Owl might best be surveyed by a specific Barn Owl Study Group. This has accordingly been set up, using the enthusiasm and expertise of several licensed Ringers and their helpers within the SOS. Existing and newly reported nest sites have been monitored and data passed to the British Trust for Ornithology, the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre and to Natural England. Nest boxes have been supplied and erected and existing ones maintained or replaced as required, and landowners advised as to how best to help and encourage Barn Owls.

Barrie Watson

Swifts

For a second year Swifts experienced cold and wet weather as they migrated north out of Africa into Europe across the Mediterranean, and many birds died from cold and starvation. Eventually our birds arrived back to their nesting sites and by June and July breeding was being documented in Birdtrack, with six figure grid references.

Lewes Swift Supporters group successfully re-formed and have organised several walks to identify where Swifts are breeding in the town. Henfield

have several good colonies and are increasing the number of boxes being put up. The Winchelsea group have even been on their local TV news highlighting the public interest in increasing Swift nesting sites. A new initiative has been started to protect Swifts in Battle, and in 2020 we aim to support them in expanding their proposed activities into Hastings. The Chichester Natural History Society have put up an amazing number of Swift boxes around the city, and we have responded to a request from Chichester Theatre to install Swift nest boxes there. The Brighton RSPB group through their volunteers have continued to carry out their Swift surveys; and several churches in Sussex have now installed suites of Swift boxes within the church spire. New groups are springing up across Sussex with our help, as the importance of encouraging more Swifts to breed, especially if our climate warms and brings alien mosquitoes and bugs to this country, is now being recognised.

I have been the SOS Swift Champion for many years and have now passed this job to David Campbell who will be delighted to encourage new groups to look after their own local Swift colonies. To help get new groups started, we have developed a presentation on how to protect your Swifts, including instructions on how to carry out surveys in towns to map where they are nesting. Please contact us at swifts@sos.org.uk so that we can increase the colonies of these wonderful birds across the whole of Sussex, which we all enjoy hearing through the months of summer.

Audrey Wende

Surveys

In 2019, Ken Smith Organised a Sussex Turtle Dove survey. A randomly selected sample of 62 squares from the last Atlas that had proved, probable or possible breeding; were surveyed between May and July. Preliminary results suggest about 30 pairs on the 'Atlas' squares but extra records from 'non-atlas' squares suggest the county population is higher than that. The data are being analysed and the full results will be published in the 2019 Sussex Bird Report.

Additionally, Richard Black organised a Sussex Willow Tit survey. There had been some recent credible reports from the County during the previous two years and, since the RSPB was organising a National Willow Tit Survey in 2019, the timing seemed appropriate. A playback methodology was used with the aim of surveying as many of the 21 tetrads that had records either during or since the last Atlas. Unfortunately, no conclusive evidence of Willow Tit presence in Sussex was found. A full report will appear in the 2019 Sussex Bird Report.

The following long-term annual surveys continued to be carried out in 2019 (survey co-ordinator's name in brackets):

(a) The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), (Helen Crabtree), 168 1km squares were surveyed this year by 123 volunteers. Most results were submitted online. Population trends for 1994-2017 have been provided by

the BTO and results and trend tables for 40 species were prepared for the Sussex Bird Report.

(b) Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), (Helen Crabtree and Dave Boddington). Most of the main sites in Sussex were covered in 2018/2019.

(c) Co-ordinated sea-watching records for 2018 were summarised in the 71st *Sussex Bird Report* by John Newnham. Sea-watching records for 2019 are still being collected.

(d) The 2018 Heronries Census (Helen Crabtree) Counts were completed at 29 sites in 2019 and five of these contained Little Egrets. Additionally, three inland Cormorant colonies were monitored.

(e) The Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey – West Sussex (Alan Perry) covered 12 heathland sites in 2019. All five priority species (Nightjar, Woodlark, Tree Pipit, Stonechat and Dartford Warbler) showed a slight increase over 2018. By contrast, Green Woodpecker and Great Spotted Woodpecker showed a slight decline, with other recorded species remaining stable.

(f) Three Waterways Breeding Bird Surveys (WBBS) (Helen Crabtree) were carried out.

(g) In winter 2018/19 the Sussex Winter Bird Surveys (Christine George) were completed for an eighth year. There was a decline in the number of squares for which records were submitted possibly due to the concurrently running the BTO Winter Birds Survey. 134 1km squares were surveyed by 84 volunteers and 110 species were recorded, including some escapes and feral species. Cattle Egret was recorded for the first time and Hawfinch for the second winter in succession.

(h) The "South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative" farmland bird survey (Helen Crabtree) was completed for the sixth year with the aim of trying to determine breeding population trends for bird species that are dependent on farmland. Volunteers surveyed 120 1km squares within the National Park (in both Sussex and Hampshire - including 60 BBS squares). Details can be found on the South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative website www.sdfarmbirds.com.

(i) Woodcock Survey – Thirteen squares were surveyed in Sussex for this annual survey.

As always, a huge number of volunteers were involved in all these activities and the Society is very grateful for the efforts of all those who have contributed so much time and effort to this work.

Richard Black, Surveys and Projects Officer

Sussex Bird Report

The 2018 *Sussex Bird Report* was published and delivered to members from late November 2019. The 288 page report consisted of the systematic list summarising the 262 species recorded during 2018, augmented with maps, tables and photographs, the Review of the Year, the Wealden Heaths

Breeding Bird Survey table, BBS and Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) tables, the Ringing Report, updated first and last Migrant Dates and New Species for Sussex in 2018 (Royal Tern and Pallid Swift). Scientific papers included were; *The Sussex influx of Hawfinches in 2017-18*, *Breeding Firecrest Survey*, *Winter Starling Roosts in Brighton*, *Results of 2017 surveys of Non-estuarine Waterbirds in 2015-6*, and *of Sussex Winter Rock Pipits 2016-7 and 2017-8*. As usual the list of species requiring a description was updated.

The drafting and production of the report involved a team of about 50 people, consisting of species account writers, proof-readers, sub-editors, the writers of the various articles and those concerned with the many superb photographs. SOS is extremely fortunate to have such a large, willing and dedicated team and as editor I would like to thank all involved. Special mention must go to the other members of the Editorial Team; Chris Barfield, Joanne Chattaway, Helen Crabtree, Luke Dray, John Hobson, Paul James, John Newnham and the Honorary Recorder Mark Mallalieu.

Peter Plant, Editor of the Sussex Bird Report

Membership & Publicity Committee

The Membership & Publicity Committee held four meetings during 2019, and there was no change to its membership. As well as the responsibilities obvious from its title, the Committee looks after the Conference, Newsletter, New Year Bird Race, the website, social media (Twitter and Facebook), and arranges an evening meeting for volunteers, known as the President's Evening.

Conference

The 2019 held in January at Clair Hall was again sold out. Peter Holden MBE gave a great talk about a life spent engaging with people about birds; Georgina Bray from RSPB Hope Farm gave an impressive presentation on how wildlife and farming can co-exist and clearly showing there is hope on Hope Farm; Rachel White from the University of Brighton talked about the importance of connecting with the next generation which clearly resonated with our President Alan Perry who is keen for the Society to follow this example; and Mark Mallalieu (SOS Recorder) delighted the audience with his investigations into the Hawfinch influx and his strong suspicion that there are likely to be more of these birds in Sussex than we are currently aware of.

Thanks to all the volunteers who make the Conference such a great event, but especially to Audrey Wende and Val Bentley.

Tim Squire, Conference Organiser

Membership

Compiling the figures of membership gains and losses throughout 2019 shows that we have maintained a status quo in finishing the year with a net gain of four members. At the end of December, our membership total stood at 1,946, still a bit short of the magic total of 2,000 we have been hoping to achieve for several years now. Looking back at the list of final totals for the last couple of decades, we came closest to the 2,000 mark in 2014, closing the year with a membership total of 1988, which was our highest ever end of year total.

We have retained well over 1,900 members in each of the last five years which is a considerable achievement considering that before 2013 we had never exceeded 1,700 members and prior to 2008 we had never exceeded 1,600. The number of members in the categories of Life and Joint Life, Student and under 20 tend to remain fairly static from year to year, with all the fluctuation being in the Full and Joint member categories. In 2019, we lost 65 members who either resigned or failed to renew their subscriptions, and sadly 16 of our members passed away during that period.

It is very noticeable that we are still failing to attract new members in the Student and Under 20 categories, but moves are afoot that will hopefully broaden our appeal to potential new younger members.

John Trowell, Membership Secretary

Society Awards

The Annual Awards were presented at the January Conference by our President, Alan Perry. The 2019 President's Award was given to Clare Buckle. In addition to her official role as Secretary to the Scientific Committee, Clare very kindly volunteered to look at the Society's responsibilities with respect to the General Data Protection Regulations which came into force throughout the EU in May 2018; she took the lead in assessing where the regulations applied to SOS and how the Society should comply with them. We very much value her expertise on this matter.

Two members were presented with long-service Stonechat Awards.

Tony Gutteridge has been contributing records since at least 1980, participated in the 1999 Nightingale survey, has carried out many other subsequent surveys, and has been coding and inputting records since 1999. He participates in BBS, SWBS, writes species accounts for *The Sussex Bird Report* and wrote several species accounts for *The Birds of Sussex*, including thrushes, Skylark, buntings and tits.

Chris Barfield joined the Society at the tender age of 15, and started contributing records in the 1970's. He started Heronry and WeBS surveys in 2001, has been participating in the BBS for over 20 years, was Newsletter Editor from 2010-2015, writes species accounts for *The Sussex Bird Report* and wrote many of the wader species accounts for *The Birds of Sussex*. He leads mid-week outings and is a member of the team which checks and publishes the sightings on the website. He has recently taken on the role of typesetting *The Sussex Bird Report*.

The Society is fortunate indeed to have such members who spend a huge amount of their time working on its behalf, ensuring that it continues to function at such a high level.

Val Bentley, Chair M & P Committee

Newsletter

2019 feels like another very positive year. It is members' contributions that make up the Society's newsletter, and again a good number of people sent in articles for inclusion. I am grateful to all of them, and to those who have allowed their photographs to be included.

Recognition is particularly due to members who contribute regularly – Elliot Chandler and Matt Eade who have written the sightings reports over the year; Mark Wright (outings reports) and Mark Mallallieu (Recorder's page). David Howey again contributed to every issue.

Val Bentley and Audrey Wende have continued to provide valuable support and advice, and together with Mags & Peter Whitcomb and Dave Green, they have all continued their unseen but essential behind the scenes work in the mailing of the newsletters.

Most members continue to prefer to have a printed copy of the Newsletter, and the number opting to have it delivered by e-mail has remained static at 146 members this year.

Anthony Holden, Newsletter Editor

New Year Bird Race

A record 18 teams, comprising 59 members, took part in the Bird Race in January, with new participants more than making up for those who decided not to compete this time. There were 138 species recorded, some imaginative team names devised, and a total of £2,737.48 raised for the Society (including gift aid claimed). New entrants "Ruff'n'Ready" (Tim Squire and Josh MacCallum Stewart) recorded 107 species and were the winners this year, with The Martlets in 2nd place; Mike's Mergansers and the Dynamic Duo were joint 3rd. All funds raised go towards supporting bird conservation in Sussex, mainly through grants to organisations carrying out this vital work. We are very grateful to all who participate, and to their sponsors, for their wonderful support for SOS.

Val Bentley, Chair M & P Committee

Outings

There were 26 events in the SOS Outings programme for 2018 and additionally the conservation work at Charleston Reedbed, which unfortunately had to be cancelled due to flooding. As usual, the events covered East and West Sussex and across the border into Kent with the ever-popular outings to Dungeness. The turnout for outings was good,

despite some drop-off for outings encountering inclement weather, with numbers in double-figures on good days and popular outings (25 for the Whitbread Hollow outing led by David Jode in September for example). For many the number of avian species recorded was very respectable, for example; Church Norton at the beginning of the year provided 59 species. A good range of birds were seen, including; Slavonian Grebe (Church Norton), Kingfisher (Rodmell), Arctic Skua (Seaford), Hobby (Pulborough Brooks), Woodcock (Lavington Common) and Turtle Dove (Woods Mill). The programme continued to highlight access via public transport when feasible.

Mark (D M) Wright, Outings Organiser

Press & Publicity

During the past year, articles have appeared in local newspapers, websites and magazines. Ten media releases were issued to press, TV and radio media contacts to promote the Society's events and activities, as well as sponsored conservation projects.

We are very pleased to report that Mya Bambrick took on the responsibility of running the Society's Twitter and Instagram accounts in 2019, and 2020 will surely see Mya's work to broaden the appeal of the SOS to younger Members bear fruit. Followers and engagement with the Society through social media continue to grow. At the beginning of 2020, the SOS Facebook page had accumulated 806 followers and 720 likes, and our Twitter page now has 2,094 followers. We will both continue to develop the Society's social media activities during 2020.

To keep up with all the latest news, including Society events, walks, projects and Sussex bird sightings, as well as bird news and science in and beyond Sussex, follow us on Twitter at @sussexornitholo, on Instagram at @sussexornitholo, and 'like' our Facebook page on facebook.com/ornitholosussex.

Rob Yarham, Press and Publicity Officer

Website

In contrast to 2018, during which the website experienced several disruptions caused by circumstances beyond our control, 2019 was probably the most uneventful year since the new site's inception, and the only things to report are a couple of updates: We added the ability to look at and download the Society's Rules, most recent AGM Minutes and Annual Report. During the summer, BT closed its MyDonate website which we had been using for fund-raising for the society, so we have now replaced this with a link to a new fund-raising site - [Wonderful.org](https://www.wonderful.org).

As always, I'd like to thank Paul James and the team who manage the Recent Sightings page which continues to operate at a very high standard, receiving many compliments from members each year.

Chris Brown, Webmaster

Minutes of the Fifty-seventh **Annual General Meeting** of the members of the **Sussex Ornithological Society** held at the **Adastra Hall, Hassocks, on Saturday 13 April 2019, at 2.30 p.m.**

PRESENT: 45 Members with the President Alan Perry in the Chair.

Apologies for absence were received from 13 members including Chair of Council.

- 1 The Minutes of the 56th AGM were approved by the members present. We are grateful to all the points raised for discussion by a member prior to this AGM. We will be making the minutes of this AGM available to members once they have been approved by Council. They will be viewable on the website along with the Rules of the Society.
- 2 The Report of the Council, previously circulated to members, was presented by Alan Perry, President, and adopted by the meeting. The apologies of the retiring Chair of Council Sue Walsh were noted. Alan congratulated all those who had contributed to the varied work of the Society throughout 2018.

Alan reminded us of the many and varied work of SOS committees and members throughout 2018; including organising the Bird Race which raised £2,739.98 (including Gift Aid); putting together an excellent and informative SOS Conference; the strengthening and consolidation of Richard Cowser's Conservation team; the addition of almost 320,000 bird records to the SOS database; the presentation of society awards recognising outstanding performance and long continuous service; the provision of a comprehensive programme of walks and outings, and the development of a superb website; just to mention a few. Membership again stands at just under 2000 members.

- 3 The Accounts, as agreed by the Examiners, along with the Examiner's Report, were adopted by the meeting. Alan Perry (Treasurer) gratefully acknowledged the assistance of Ted Merrikin throughout the year. He confirmed that the finances of the Society remain in a very healthy position, with our bank accounts holding £135,184.60 at this date. We continue to support various projects, although you should note that some money shown in accounts as allocated has not yet have been claimed. Since 1972, the Society has contributed a massive £345,807 towards deserving projects, which is a fantastic achievement. Alan thanked those members now paying their subscriptions by standing order as this saves us a huge amount of time. We are also pleased to record that £5,236 has been raised in Gift Aid during 2018. To date our gift aid total stands at £4554, with more to come throughout the year. Alan then resigned from the post of Treasurer.

- 4 Election of Officers – The following Honorary Officers, being eligible without nomination, were re-elected ; Alan Perry (President), Chris Davis (Secretary), Dr Richard Black (Surveys and Projects Officer), Richard Cowser (Conservation Officer), Anthony Holden (Newsletter Editor), Mark Mallalieu (Recorder), Dr Peter Plant (Sussex Bird Report Editor), and Robert Yarham (Press and Publicity).
- 5 Election of members of Council – The following members of Council, being eligible without nomination, were re-elected; Jonathan Cook, Chris Lowmass, Graeme Lyons and Mike Russell.

Ted Merrikin, nominated by Jonno Cook, seconded by Mark Mallalieu, was elected as Treasurer.

Jon Curson, nominated by Chris Davis, seconded by Neil Greenaway; and Mya Bambrick nominated by Val Bentley, seconded by Mike Russell were elected as Members of Council.

- 6 Retiring members of Council – Sue Walsh (Chair of Council) and Alison Giacomelli were thanked by Alan Perry for their huge contribution to the activities of SOS. Alan then explained that Mike Russell has offered himself for election to the position of Chair of Council for 2019-20 subject to the agreement by vote from Council Members at the May 2019 meeting.
- 7 Appointment of Examiners – The Examiners were thanked for their work on the 2018 Accounts. Under rule 14, Andrew Stringer and Tom Snow were appointed as Examiners’ of the Accounts for 2019.
- 8 Any Other Business – There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 15:10.

Following a break for refreshments and the raffle, Nic Scothern (Regional Director of RSPB) gave an excellent talk outlining the present and future activities of RSPB in our local area; which included discussion of how priorities are likely to change in the future. The talk included grateful acknowledgement of the huge contribution SOS have made towards local conservation projects.

Profits from the raffle were	£91.00
Donations for refreshments	£17.65
Merchandise totalled	<u>£53.00</u>
Overall total	<u>£161.65</u>



