



The following is a summary by Officers and Members with specific responsibilities, setting out the Society's achievements during 2022 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

COUNCIL

The Society is managed and run by a member elected Council who are also Trustees of the Society.

The current members of Council are as follows: - Chris Corrigan (President), Mike Russell (Chairman), Alan Swetman (Secretary), Ted Merrikin (Treasurer), Matt Twydell (Surveys & Projects Officer), Richard Cowser (Conservation Officer), Mark Mallalieu (Bird Report Editor), Martin Daniel (Newsletter Editor), Mya Bambrick (Council Member), Jonathan Cook (Council Member), Jon Curson (Council Member) and Katie Nethercoat (Council Member).

COMMITTEES

The work of Council is hugely supported by the work of various committees and sub-committees.

Membership of these as at 31 December was as follows: -

Scientific Committee Mark Mallalieu (Chairman), Joanne Chattaway (Secretary), Dave Boddington, David Campbell, Richard Cowser, Dr Helen Crabtree, Dr John Newnham, Matt Twydell, Dr Ken Smith.

Bird Report Mark Mallalieu (Editor), Chris Barfield, Clare Buckle (Asst. Editor), David Campbell, Joanne Chattaway, Graham Hughes (Asst. Editor), Paul James, Simon Linnington, Owen Mitchell, Dr John Newnham, Laurence Pitcher, Dr Ken Smith.

Records Committee David Campbell (Recorder), Martin Orchard-Webb (Asst. Recorder), Bola Akinola, Chris Ball, Derek Barber, Brian Cox, Gareth James, Matt Phelps, Laurence Pitcher.

Membership & Publicity Committee Jonno Cook (Chairman), Val Bentley, Chris Brown, Martin Daniel, Chris Davis, Audrey Wende, Dr Mark (DM) Wright.

Outing/Programme Committee Dr Mark (DM) Wright (Outings Organiser), Bernie Forbes, Audrey Wende.

To all those who have retired from Council and the Society's committees during 2022, our very sincere thanks for all your hard work and efforts.

REPORT OF COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

2022 saw a gradual return to normality following covid-19 lockdown regulations and it was with relief that members, volunteers, and committee members were able to meet up face to face again. A full walks programme for the year was organised. Council continued to have a mix of zoom and face-to-face meetings.

At the beginning of the year, our conference was still held remotely with 4 excellent presentations over two evenings while a series of zoom evening talks again proved popular. It was a relief to have an open AGM where we able to acknowledge the retiring President, Alan Perry, and the immense contribution he has made to the Society over many years. Alan's replacement as President is Chris Corrigan who will be well known to many of you. He has made an enormous contribution to conservation in Sussex through his employment with the RSPB and long association with the Society and we look forward to his guiding hand in moving us forward over the coming years.

John Trowell stepped down as Membership Secretary a role he has undertaken since 1977 and is owed an enormous vote of thanks for his dedication for nearly half a century. Thankfully, Chris Davis who also has a long association with the Society, agreed to take on this important role. Val Bentley after 19 years also stood down as Chair of the Membership and Publicity Committee and has also served 3 terms as secretary but is happy to continue her long-term involvement with SOS, a great relief to us all. Meanwhile, Jonno Cook agreed to take on the role of Chair and is looking forward to taking the Society's involvement forward in engaging the wider public in the future. Jonno stepped down from Council due to completing his 5-year term and was replaced by Katie Nethercoat who is currently employed with RSPB as Principal Administrator to the Deputy Director for Public Engagement and is based in Brighton. David Boddington took over the role of Swift Co-ordinator from David Campbell who remains as the County Recorder.

On reading the Officials' and Members' reports along with the Financial Statement you will recognise just how much is undertaken on behalf of birds in Sussex by many dedicated volunteers who contribute so much time, expertise, and enthusiasm to achieve the Society's aims and objectives.

The beginning of 2023 finds the Society in a very good position with membership increased over the last year, helped by the introduction of online membership enrolment plus the offer of the previous Sussex Bird Reports on application. Our membership at the year-end is 2,071. Although membership has increased, we will continue to try and encourage more people to help support us in vital work to help conserve the birds in Sussex. The reports contained within illustrate how successful we have been and therefore I am very proud to present this Annual Report to our members.

Mike Russell - Chairman

TREASURER'S REPORT

Sussex Ornithological Society once again had a financially positive year in 2022. Income from members' subscriptions, legacies, donations, and Gift Aid was £39,232. The Society is extremely grateful to members for all donations received, all monies given will be used to support conservation projects. We are particularly grateful for the legacies left to the Society by individuals remembering us in their wills.

During the year, the Society donated a total of £25,143 for conservation projects. £21,840 was pledged to the RSPB (£20,000 contribution to the exciting enhancement project of the Ferry Pool and Field at Pagham and £1,840 towards the Goat grazing project at Broadwater Warren). A further £2,500 was pledged as a contribution towards the removal of Carp at Coombe Valley Nature Park. I have included in this report information from the RSPB on their progress with these projects.

Thank you to all members who now renew their Society membership by standing order, direct credit and now via our website, this is very much appreciated by me. For those of you that still favour cheques that is fine just send them to me. My address is Blessings, Barns Farm Lane, Storrington, RH20 4AH.

Our accountants Kreston Reeves have completed the examination of the Society's accounts for 2022 and I have included in this report the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet in a simplified format. For those of you that require greater detail the Trustees' Report and financial statement can be found on our website in addition to the Charity Commissions.

Since 1972 the Society has donated £437,000 to deserving projects. I urge you to register with me for Gift Aid so I may be able to claim an extra 25% on top of your donations and membership fee, to date we have claimed a staggering £81,500 from HMRC. The yearly Bird Race continues to be very popular and since 2002 the sum raised from sponsorship is £35,497 including Gift Aid.

Ted Merrikin - Treasurer

Sussex Ornithological Society

Statement of financial activities
for the year ended 31 December 2022

	Note	Unrestricted funds 2022 £	Designated funds 2022 £	Restricted funds 2022 £	Total funds 2022 £	Total funds 2021 £
Income from:						
Donations, legacies and Gift Aid	3	7,713	3,419	-	11,132	9,757
Charitable activities	4	816	-	-	816	887
Other trading activities	5	1,988	-	-	1,988	1,642
Investments	6	1,379	-	-	1,379	1,422
Membership subscriptions	7	23,917	-	-	23,917	21,779
Total income		35,813	3,419	-	39,232	35,487
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds	8	864	-	-	864	-
Charitable activities	10	48,282	1,285	-	49,567	30,075
Total expenditure		49,146	1,285	-	50,431	30,075
Transfers between funds		1,088	(1,088)			
Net movement of funds		(12,244)	1,045	-	(11,199)	5,412
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward		78,413	8,954	455	87,822	82,410
Net movement of funds		(12,244)	1,045	-	(11,199)	5,412
Total funds carried forward		66,169	9,999	455	76,623	87,822

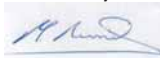
Balance Sheet

As at 31 December 2022

	Note	2022 £	As restated 2021 £
Current assets			
Debtors	19	1,330	522
Cash at bank and in hand		104,038	97,545
		<u>105,368</u>	<u>98,067</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	20	(28,745)	(10,245)
Net current assets		<u>76,623</u>	<u>87,822</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>76,623</u>	<u>87,822</u>
Net current assets		<u>76,623</u>	<u>87,822</u>
Charity funds			
Restricted funds	22	455	455
Designated funds	22	9,999	8,954
Unrestricted funds	22	66,169	78,413
Total funds		<u>76,623</u>	<u>87,822</u>

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Trustees

on 28/02/2023 and signed on their behalf by:



Mike Russell
Chairman

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

There were four Scientific Committee meetings in 2022, three held via Zoom video conferencing and one in person. At the June meeting Joanne Chattaway was welcomed as the new secretary to the Scientific Committee and Mark Mallalieu was re-elected as Chair. All members of the committee made valuable contributions to the Society's work, including on records, the database, surveys, conservation and archiving, which are reported below. Special mention must be made of Richard Cowser's excellent work as Conservation officer and Dr John Newnham's continued hard work on the Society's database of bird records.

Joanne Chattaway – Secretary to Scientific Committee

THE SUSSEX BIRD REPORT

The 2021 Sussex Bird Report was published and delivered to members in early November 2022. Following a competitive tender, the Society invited Swallowtail Print to print and arrange distribution of the report, which was done extremely well and considerably faster than in recent years. New biodegradable envelopes ensured that no copies were damaged in transit.

The 288-page report consisted of the systematic list covering the 258 species recorded during 2021, plus Escapes and Introductions, augmented with maps, tables, graphs, photographs and artwork. There were papers on the 2020-2021 Marsh Tit survey; Dartford Warblers in Ashdown Forest; the 2020-2021 Honey-buzzard survey; Common Nightingales and Turtle Doves in Chiddingfold Forest; and urban nesting gulls. The report also included the Introduction to the Classified Records, Review of the Year, BTO Breeding Bird Survey results, Sussex Winter Bird Survey results, the Ringing Report, updated First & Last Migrant Dates, the Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey table and Finders Accounts for Notable Species in 2021 (White-throated Sparrow and Northern Mockingbird), as well as a note on the 2011 Long-toed Stint.

The report received much positive feedback on social media, including an excellent review by BirdGuides. The drafting and production of the report involved a team of about 50 people, consisting of species account writers, proof-readers, assistant editors, the writers of the various papers and articles and the contribution of many superb photographs and pieces of artwork. As ever, essential preparatory work involved making comprehensive 2021 data easily accessible, with accompanying guidance for account writers and proof-readers.

The Society is fortunate to have a large and dedicated team involved in the production of the report and as editor I would like to thank them all. Special mention must go to the other members of the Editorial Team: Chris Barfield, Clare Buckle, David Campbell (Honorary Recorder), Joanne Chattaway, Graham Hughes, Paul James, Simon Lington, Owen Mitchell, Dr John Newnham, Laurence Pitcher and Dr Ken Smith.

Mark Mallalieu – Bird Report Editor

CONSERVATION

During the year there were some encouraging steps from Government to strengthen protection for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB's) and Ancient Woodland. Government also clarified that house building numbers would be targets, rather than being mandatory, but we are yet to see what impact this will have on house building numbers. There was less progress on sewage discharges, where it has now been recognised that a fundamental redesign of the nation's sewage systems is required, to separate surface water run-off from sewage and consequent overflow of both in periods of rain. (In 2020 water companies released sewage into English rivers on more than 400,000 occasions – or to put it another way for 3 million hours!). Just how many years and how much money it will take to sort this out is far from certain, but at least it is now on water companies' agendas.

In Sussex good progress has been made by Sussex Wildlife Trust and partners in defining potential Nature Recovery Networks, but processes and the funding to establish these has yet to be defined by Government to the frustration of many county conservationists.

The need to demonstrate water neutrality on building new developments in large parts of Chichester and all of Horsham and Crawley Districts, led to delays in publishing Local Plans in all three Authorities and to approving new developments. Water neutrality involves no more water being used after a new development is occupied than before it was built. By year end plans had been developed towards how water neutrality is to be achieved.

With these uncertainties only Mid Sussex District issued a new Local Plan draft during the year, on which we commented, and this year there were no Public Examinations of Final Local Plans for us to attend.

However, we were actively engaged in other planning matters, including

- Objecting to South Downs National Park's (SDNP) blueprint to allow redevelopment costing up to £28m of the Shoreham Cement Works site by possibly permitting an activity centre, together with up to 400 houses extending west to the River Adur, commercial buildings, a sewage treatment works and road improvements. Instead, we suggested that a much more appropriate and far cheaper solution would be to demolish some of the existing buildings and let the site rewild. SDNP have recognised our argument and appear to have added it to their other site development options – and we expect to see their proposed direction of travel when their Local Plan is published in 2025.

- On Rampion 2, we provided evidence of how important Climping (where the cable from the wind farm will come ashore) is for migrant birds. As a result, measures will be taken to minimise surface disturbance at Climping by ensuring that the cable passes through the area in bored tunnels rather than in the more habitat disruptive cut-and-cover trenches. We, and others, also requested changes to the proposed route where it crosses Henfield Levels, which look likely to be adopted. We have

requested that some mitigation measures be delivered at Climping and at Oakdene where the 37km long onshore cable joins the national grid and await Rampion's response regarding this. Whilst the onshore Rampion team have responded well to our concerns the off-shore team has been less responsive and we remain concerned that hardly any account is being taken of the impact on the many hundreds of thousands of sea birds that migrate up and down the Channel and that no account is being taken of any birds that migrate across the Channel.

- We responded to the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities' consultation on byelaw changes across Sussex, asking that all hand gathering, including bait digging, be banned on the Adur estuary, as we believe that disturbance by bait diggers is one of the main reasons for the decline in wader species on the Lower Adur being noticeably greater than across Sussex as a whole. Whilst we were able to show evidence about the decline in wader species, we were not able to show that bait digging was a significant cause of this decline although Natural England have also noted it as a problem. Hopefully some new monitoring by SDOS will build up a database that enables the significance of bait digging as a source of disturbance to be established.

- We have been working with our partners (SWT, RSPB, CPRE and Woodland Trust) to oppose Centre Parcs' plans to build a new holiday village on ancient woodland in the High Weald AONB, so were absolutely delighted to learn in February that they are not going to proceed with this development – this is a real testament to how opposition to development CAN be effective. Thank you to everyone who has helped us oppose this.

-Meanwhile an application for 224 holiday lodges and other facilities is being developed for the Normanhurst Estate near Battle, which is also in the High Weald AONB and will involve the loss of a considerable area of Ancient Woodland. During the year I joined the High Weald AONB Planning Group so have been able to brief both them and our Center Parcs partners on the Normanhurst development.

- Working with local birders we objected to 4 piecemeal developments of Bewl Water Centre, providing evidence that the huge numbers of Common and Black-headed Gulls that roost on Bewl Water in bad weather meet the criteria for the site to be designated as an SSSI and Ramsar site. Natural England have acknowledged the validity of the SSSI "case" but have many such cases to consider. Our fear is that the gulls could be disturbed by the site being developed into all-year round tourist accommodation, especially as it is currently being marketed as a summer site for hen and stag parties. The first of the proposed developments was rejected by Wealden District Council and has now gone to appeal.

- We also worked with Chichester District Council to provide further evidence to support their proposed Strategic Wildlife Corridors on the east side of Chichester which have come under fresh threat from new proposals for housing developments.

During the year we commented on 18 individual planning applications and one Neighbourhood Plan. We continued to provide Chichester Harbour Conservancy with comments on planning applications of interest to them.

We were glad to see that the evidence we provided has persuaded the Sussex Local Wildlife Sites Initiative to approve some significant extensions to the Littlehampton Golf Course LWS next to Climping. We are also glad to see that the Combe Valley Subgroup have made headway in agreeing to projects that will improve the Combe Valley Countryside Park for birds. This could include creating a scrape on a farmers land, the removal of carp from 5 ponds/lakes owned by ESCC which should improve insect life and therefore be good for birds and a major programme of works by SWT to restore their Filsham Reedbed Reserve to its former glory. While the Society has pledged 50% towards the cost of the carp removal, the scrape has yet to be funded.

I am again grateful to the support we have received from the Sussex Planning for Nature Group during the year. I am also very grateful to Anthony Holden and to Terry Allen who have helped me throughout the year, and to Dr John Newnham who has helped with data extraction.

Richard Cowser - Conservation Officer

CHARLESTON REEDBED

There was a severe backlog of work needing doing after the restrictions of Covid and the main tasks were the clearance of extensive growth of bramble and the coppicing of some willows. At the beginning of the year members of the Ringing Group cleared an area of brambles which then meant they could coppice the willows that had been overgrown with the bramble. The boardwalk was also repaired where necessary. In early February volunteers from the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) visited and together with members of the ringing group cleared a large area of blackthorn and bramble. They came again in early March for more bramble clearing and willow coppicing. At last inroads were being made into the backlog. All cut bramble, blackthorn and the coppiced willow were burnt on site. No management work was carried out during the breeding season for obvious reasons.

Due to heavy rain in late autumn the SDNPA volunteers had to call off their visit in early November although some stalwarts from the ringing group did do some clearance work on the day despite the rain, and some more boardwalk repairs. Then the reedbed was flooded really badly and the Society's work party had to be cancelled: there really was no way the reedbed could be entered even with thigh waders! However, the water eventually receded and the SDNPA volunteers joined the ringing group in early December for yet another bramble bash in an area to allow the reeds to dominate again. Also, on this day the repairs to the boardwalk caused by the flooding were carried out. Finally, debris from the flood and damage to the pallets forming the boardwalk was collected and burnt on another date, together with some other clearance work by a few members of the ringing group.

Many thanks to the SDNPA volunteers for their efforts, they really do make a difference to the amount of work that can be carried out. Also, thanks again to the ringing group who are constantly working on areas. We cannot overstate the gratitude the Society's owes to the owner Richard Brown who allows us to manage the site.

Tim Parmenter

DATABASE

During 2022 over 630k records were added to the Society's database, 83% involved observations for 2021 and 2022 but the remainder for earlier years. More than 10k records came from six record sources; these, and the percentage of the total, were the BTO's Birdtrack (38%), Cornell University's eBird (29%), eBird historic records (14%), BTO Garden Birdwatch (3%), Wetland Bird Survey (2%) and the diaries of Frank Dougharty (2%). The 2022 dataset will not be completed until later in the year but more details about the 2021 records were published in the 74th Sussex Bird Report.

Most 2021 records and recently added historic observations were shared with the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre in September 2022; these observations then being available to be used by local authorities, conservationists and researchers.

The Society's multi-user online database CoBRA2 (C2) continued to be used regularly; during 2022. The record extraction module was used on 2006 occasions on 308 different days by 28 users. The Account Writers module, which includes considerable analysis of the records, was accessed on 741 occasions by 31 users on 115 different dates.

Despite the extensive automated record checking programmed into the system, there was still much work to be done by the database team (Dr John Newnham and Alex Glossop) or Recorder (David Campbell) in contacting observers to query records.

The database continues to function very well and required little change during 2022 but when needed Chris Brown, the Society's Webmaster, and his colleague Andy Lawrence have continued to be very responsive to changes required to the database. The Society continues to be extremely grateful to Chris and Andy for the continuing work they are undertaking in adding new features to CoBRA2 and to Alex for the valuable help he provides.

Dr John Newnham – Database Manager

Records

This summary relates to bird observations made in 2021 due to the time required to process and analyse a year's records, and to maintain continuity with previous Recorder's reports. 258 species were recorded in Sussex in 2021, four fewer than in 2020. A total of 182 submissions for sightings of rare birds at a county or national level were handled, including six British Birds Rarities Committee species: Northern Mockingbird, White-throated Sparrow, Rustic Bunting, Black Stork, Collared Pratincole and two Kentish Plovers.

As usual, data was gathered for a submission to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel and a report on bird recording in Sussex was sent to the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre to be included in the ADASTRA report. The Society also contributed to the scarce migrants report to be published in British Birds.

One of the notable events of the year was the second Black-winged Stilt breeding record for Sussex, with a pair at Rye Harbour NR producing four chicks, though the ultimate outcome of the attempt was unknown. Two pairs of Cattle Egret also bred in Sussex in 2021, while seven pairs of Honey-buzzard and a minimum of 25 pairs of Goshawk were notable. Monitoring work revealing the success of four pairs of Stone-curlew on the South Downs and the location of three active Lesser Spotted Woodpecker nests.

The first inland breeding attempt by a pair of Black Redstarts took place at Gatwick Airport, while two coastal breeding pairs were found. Hawfinch was confirmed breeding in Westdean Woods, but Wood Warbler and Grasshopper Warbler are now hanging on by a thread, with no confirmed breeding records for either species in Sussex 2021.

The SOSRC worked through batches of records quickly and with expertise. The support of Martin Orchard-Webb (Assistant Recorder) and Dr John Newnham (Database Manager) was invaluable in keeping things running smoothly. The few paper records we continue to receive take time to digitise, so the volunteers who give up their time to input this information are hugely appreciated.

David Campbell - Recorder

SURVEYS

In 2022 the Society organised the Nightingale survey. The survey protocol followed the methodology of the 2012 national BTO survey. The 2022 survey used 2012 survey data and more recent Society records available at the 1km square level. 140 1km squares were requested by volunteers to survey in 2022. The full results will be published in the 2022 Sussex Bird Report.

The following long-term annual surveys continued to be carried out in 2022 (survey co-ordinator's name in brackets):

(a) The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), (Dr Helen Crabtree), 184 1km squares were surveyed this year by volunteers. Most results were submitted online. Population trends for 1994-2021 have been provided by the BTO and results and trend tables for 40 species have been prepared for the 2021 Sussex Bird Report.

(b) Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), (Dr Helen Crabtree and Dave Boddington): Most of the main sites in Sussex were covered in 2021/2022.

(c) Co-ordinated sea watching records for 2021 were summarised in the Sussex Bird Report by Dr John Newnham. Sea watching records for 2022 are still being collected.

(d) The 2022 Heronries Census (Dr Helen Crabtree) Counts were completed at 41 sites in 2022 and ten of these contained Little Egrets while two contained Cattle Egrets.

(e) The Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey – West Sussex (Alan Perry) covered 12 heathland sites in 2022. The five priority species surveyed being Nightjar, Woodlark, Tree Pipit, Stonechat and Dartford Warbler.

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

(g) In winter 2021/22 the Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) (Christine George) was completed for its eleventh year. 163 1km squares received at least one survey (the second highest number ever) and of these 143 squares received the recommended early and late surveys. The squares were surveyed by 106 volunteers (the highest ever) and 113 different species were found plus several escaped/feral species. An article with further details has been published in the 2021 Sussex Bird Report.

(h) Woodcock Survey. Sixteen squares were surveyed in Sussex for this annual survey.

Looking forward the Society will be carrying out a Nightjar survey in 2023 (May to July). Volunteers are being sought for this 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.

Matt Twydell – Surveys and Projects Officer

Sussex Barn Owl Study Group (SBOSG) 2022 activities and outcomes.

Monitoring outcomes

2022 proved to be a challenging year for SBOSG. Medium term illness took its toll plus long-awaited, well-deserved holidays coincided with monitoring times. Several Barn Owl's began breeding earlier than normal here in Sussex, in some instances by up to 4 weeks, resulting in more than 11 broods in boxes where we found fledged chicks and or roosting adults and therefore chicks could not be accurately counted or ringed. *Note, SBOSG avoid visiting boxes at times where incubating adults may be disturbed, which is generally April / May.*

Due to these challenges most of the monitoring data is, therefore, a meaningless comparison with previous year's numbers, which is unfortunate, the exception being average brood size, which is a key indicator of how our Owls fared in 2022.

The group visited 146 boxes, making an estimated total of 178(E) box visits, having to make serial visits for various reasons. 50 boxes were occupied by Barn Owls in which chicks were at a suitable age and condition for recording and ringing. Despite missing early broods, when we look back at previous year's activities, we typically find a 30-33% visit / occupancy rate, excluding early breeding records, this was still achieved in 2022.

127 pulli were ringed. All encountered were healthy weights, only 1 brood was found where all the young had perished. 5 new adults were trapped and ringed at nest box sites, 2 of which were in their 4 th calendar year.

5 adults were re-trapped, (previously trapped and ringed by the group), 1 moving 25km from a mid- Sussex group site to a South downs coastal site. Others ranged from 3 to 14 km from natal ringing to newly occupied boxes. 1 adult was controlled (previously trapped and ringed by 'A.N. other' ringer) and had moved 11km, again to a new box site.

Mean average brood size, based on successful visits was 2.54. 2021 saw Sussex achieve a mean average brood size of 3.2. Given the high mortality rate in first year and second calendar year birds, a 'rule of thumb' mean brood average of 3.0 is thought to be required to maintain our Sussex Barn Owl population.

Current and future activities.

In 2022 a further 21 Barn Owl boxes were installed in suitable locations. 1 box installed in February was found occupied in July! Another 4 were replaced due to deterioration and 5 were repaired 'in situ'.

6 Tawny Owl boxes were erected, plus 6 Little Owl boxes. A high weald project due to commence in 2023 has scope for a double figure Little Owl box requirement, subject to survey. Our boxes again provided nest sites for Jackdaw, Stock Dove, Tawny Owl, Mandarin Duck, Grey Squirrel and English Hornet. Some occupants welcome, some not!

Once again, thanks go out to the Society, from the group, for the valuable funding provided for Barn Owl boxes. Anyone wishing to get involved with our group to lend a hand in helping us conserve Owls in Sussex, please see the Society website for our contact details.

Terry Hallahan

SWIFTS

It has been encouraging to see the continued development of Swift groups across the county, with the Lewes Swift Supporters group going from strength to strength, and many other groups either building on previous years' experience or starting from scratch. Good numbers of Swift nests were identified through various local groups and although only a small proportion of these were in nest boxes, they are helping to address the issue of the reduction in nest sites due to modifications in buildings.

The Society has provided advice on the siting of Swift boxes, and various aspects of creating and maintaining local groups, including the provision of funding to help purchase and install boxes. More help and advice is available at swifts@sos.org.uk

Swifts had a somewhat mixed breeding season, with a productive start. However, as the summer progressed the extreme heat had a likely impact on chick survival.

Dave Boddington – Swift Champion

Membership and Publicity Committee

New chair – Jonathan (Jonno) Cook was appointed to this post in the autumn of 2022 after spending five years on Council. As a background Jonno has worked for the RSPB since 2005 and prior to those 20 years in newspaper publishing. He's the first to admit that he's not an expert birder but takes part in annual surveys and is passionate about the importance of biodiversity to our world and wellbeing.

In addition to our popular walks programme, we have three Zoom events arranged for those dark winter evenings. Bookings will be via Eventbrite, and you can catch up after on our You Tube channel.

Tues, February 21 19:00, Bird Crime - Jenny Shenton RSPB Wildlife Crime Unit.

Tues, March 7 19:00, Sussex Rarities - Matt Eade

Thurs, March 23 19:00, Birding on a budget - low cost and low carbon wildlife photography - Sara Humphrey

Jonno Cook – Chair of M & P Committee

SOCIETY AWARDS

As no face-to-face Conference was possible in 2022, it was agreed that the Awards should not be made this year.

NEW YEAR BIRD RACE

After a COVID-19 restricted 2021 Race, renamed a Species Challenge, it was good to see 16 teams, comprising 56 members, taking part in 2022. Regular participants The Dynamic Duo (Elliot Chandler and John Thorogood) were the first team out in the field, seeing 102 species, which proved to be an unassailable target. The total number of different species seen by the teams was 139, with 16 seen by only a single team and – rather surprisingly – only 6 species seen by all!

The Society is very grateful to all for their enthusiasm, and for the £1,732 raised for bird conservation projects in the county.

Val Bentley – Bird Race Organiser

PRESS & PUBLICITY

The post of Press and Publicity Officer continued to remain vacant throughout the year, this is being addressed through a different approach to volunteer recruitment started in December 2022. We hope to have appointed a new person into this voluntary role by February 2023.

Jonno Cook – Chair M&P Committee

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Society's social media continues to grow, with 3,561 followers on Twitter, 1,513 followers on Facebook, and 329 followers on Instagram. More people, including those new to birding, are tagging us in posts of their sightings and ID questions, which shows the Society is having a greater outreach. This has been aided by retweets and shares by well-known accounts such as Sussex Wildlife Trust and the RSPB reserves. In the coming year, I'd like to see our Instagram develop with more regular posts, as it's a great platform for engaging with new audiences such as young people.

Mya Bambrick

Conference

Restrictions due to COVID-19 meant that, as in 2021, an in-person Conference was not possible, so for a second year Tim Squire organised an online event spread over two days on the weekend of 29th and 30th January. Tim also contributed one of the four presentations, on efforts to conserve and improve chalk grassland on the South Downs for birds, butterflies, and flora. Pete Potts and Dr Ken Smith respectively provided fascinating insights into the lives of Greenshanks and Green Sandpipers.

The keynote speech was by Ben MacDonald on his inspiring vision for a rewilded UK. The event was both informative and enjoyable not only for those who participated live, but for those who were subsequently able to watch the outstanding set of talks on the Society's YouTube channel.

A little more than a fortnight after the Day One presentations had been posted on the channel, there had been 325 views of the talks by Pete Potts and Dr Ken Smith. Thanks to Tim Squire for putting together his fifth excellent programme, and Adrian Thomas and Alan Perry for also helping make the conference a resounding success.

Archives

The electronic archive has continued to be updated on a regular basis this year. As in recent years the main additions have been copies of the minutes of the Society's committee meetings, either held by Zoom or in person, together with the relevant supporting documents which have included the reports of the Conservation Officer and the Recorder.

The older paper archive (before 2004) continues to be housed in the West Sussex County Archive in Chichester Record Office with the kind support of the County archivist and her team. Documents can be viewed by prior arrangement with the archivist.

Mark (CMV) Wright - Archivist

Newsletter

The pandemic had a significant impact on the newsletter, as on all aspects of the Society's activities. The impact affected both content – for instance because some activities such as outings and meetings were suspended or changed – and in some instances production. With the ending of Covid-19 restrictions, the newsletter saw a return closer to normality in 2022.

The year saw a wide range of articles both from stalwart contributors and new writers, reflecting the whole gamut of ornithological and birding activity in the county. Images on the newsletter covers demonstrated the skills of the county's photographers in capturing images of both rarities and resident birds. Thanks are due to all contributors of articles and images for their generosity in offering material that reflects the depth of expertise and enthusiasm available to the society.

As part of the herculean efforts of the team updating the society's membership list, the year also saw a concerted effort to switch members' receipt of the newsletter from hard copy to emailed version. Delivery in this fashion means the society has more money to spend on conservation and ensures members get information faster. A significant number of switches did occur following an article by the Treasurer asking for members to change, and most new members do receive the emailed version (as they have to opt in to get the hard copies).

However, a large proportion of the membership still opts to receive the newsletter as hard copy, suggesting that not changing is a matter of choice, not inertia, and the hard copy version is unlikely to wither away in the near future. In this context some cracks in the currently rather tortuous production and delivery process did become apparent in 2022 and these will need to be addressed in the current year.

Thanks are due to all the people who helped in many ways with the newsletter in 2022, including the ever-reliable Anthony Holden, Val Bentley, Audrey Wende, Peter and Mags Whitcomb, and Richard Durn. And while the band of long-established contributors of articles and images was supplemented with fresh talent in 2022, new contributors are always welcome.

Martin Daniel – Newsletter Editor

WEBSITE

The main new feature of the website in 2022 was the addition of an online membership system which went live in March. Created using a third- party component called MemberPress, it allows new members to join and existing members to renew by filling in an online form and paying with a credit or debit card.

Our goal is to import all existing members into this online system over the next few months. Once this has been done, and every member can log in to the system (using their email address and a password) we will be able to provide some online content to our membership only, e.g., news and features not available to the public.

Thanks go to Luke Perry for his guidance and effort in building this system.

Finally, as always thanks go to the Sightings Team, led by Paul James, for their diligence in keeping the Recent Sightings page up to date.

Chris Brown – Webmaster

MEMBERSHIP - 2022

On December 31, 2022, SOS had 2071 members (comprising of 1,458 individual members, 437 joint/family members, 172 Life/Joint Life Members and 4 Life members for whom we no longer have a correspondence address). This is an approximate 3% increase on December 31, 2021, when we had 2008 members.

The electronic membership option went live in 2022 and is already making the processing of new members much simpler. We have now separated members into “postal” or “email” membership and are encouraging new members to select the “email” option for Newsletters which will save the Society a considerable amount in postage fees.

We had 200 new members in 2022 of which 168 came through the online system. There was a dramatic increase in membership in November when the offer was made to supply new members with the 2020 and 2021 Bird Reports followed by the 2022 Bird Report when published, and 82 new members were processed in this period.

Unfortunately, there are always losses each year due to factors such as failure to renew subscriptions, moves away from Sussex, resignations for reasons unknown and sadly, members passing away. Despite this, we still recorded good growth over 2022.

We continue to discuss ways to increase our appeal to young people although our current membership indicates no significant increase to our numbers of student and under age 21 members.

I have been greatly assisted in settling into the role of Membership Secretary by Val Bentley and Ted Merrikin, and on behalf of the Society, we would all like to thank John Trowell for his dedicated work as Membership Secretary for an incredible 45(!) years in the position and wish him every happiness in his well-earned retirement from the role.

Chris Davis – Membership Secretary

OUTINGS 2022

The 2022 Outings Programme, post Covid restrictions, enabled the running of 23 Outings (although unfortunately it was necessary to cancel the Thorney Island outing) from the total of 9 during Covid. The first 2022 at Rye Harbour encountered appalling weather only braved by three (the Selsey/Church Norton Outing in November also experienced horrible weather similarly reducing turnout to 3) but otherwise weather and turnouts were good. The outing turnout average however was 13 with the highest at Old Lodge with 30. The average species outing tally was 36; the highest tally

reported was for the January RSPB Pagham Harbour outing namely 72 with the February Dungeness Outing recording 62. To pick out a couple of 'notables': for the Splashpoint Seawatch the Society was joined by the Ashdown Bird Club; for the Arlington Reservoir Outing an unringed White Stork put in an appearance. Finally it was pleasing to welcome new members or potential new members at Outings again.

Mark Wright – Outings Organiser

Sussex Ornithological Society

Registered Charity 256936 www.sos.org.uk

Minutes of the sixtieth ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the members of the SUSSEX

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY held at The Adastra Hall, Hassocks on Saturday 9 April 2022 at 14:30.

PRESENT: 28 members were welcomed by President Alan Perry who made particular mention of how good it was to be back to a face to face meeting after 2 years of Zoom.

- 1) **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** received from 18 members.
- 2) **THE MINUTES OF THE 59TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** were unanimously approved as a true and accurate reflection of that meeting. (Proposer Peter Plant, Seconder Audrey Wende).
- 3) **APPROVAL OF THE OFFICERS AND MEMBERS REPORT** for year ended 31 December 2021, approved by Council on 7 March 2021. Mike Russell (Chair of Council) presented the report to the meeting again commenting on how the Society had performed strongly in difficult circumstances. Whilst there had been strong performances by many, Mike commented particularly on the work undertaken by Richard Cowser, Conservation Officer and also the excellent Sussex Bird Report prepared by Mark Mallalieu and the Bird report team. Mark had also organised an excellent series of zoom talks during lockdown but we were now looking for someone to take over this role going forward. Going forward it is encouraging to note that we now have an E-Membership capability via the website which should make it much easier for new members to join, huge thanks to Chris Brown and Luke Perry for the work they have done on this project. The report was voted through unanimously (Proposer Val Bentley, Seconder Richard Cowser).
- 4) **APPROVAL OF THE TRUSTEES REPORT & FINANCIAL STATEMENT** for year ended 31 December 2021, approved by Council 7 March 2021. Ted Merrikin (Treasurer) presented the report. In summary, income for 2021 was £34k, of which £21.8k was membership income with a net positive movement of funds of £5k. This has increased Net Current Assets to £87.8k being £98k assets (virtually all cash) with creditors of £10.2k. Overall a very strong financial position (Net Current Assets has since increased to £106k as of today's date). Full financial report available online. Ted also commented on the positive move to E-Membership where week 1 of operation has seen 19 new members. The report was voted through unanimously (Proposer David Howey, Seconder Mike Russell).
- 5) **AMENDMENT TO RULE 14.** To simplify the amount of report material that is circulated to members pre AGM and in doing so save the Society c£1,500 (£600 printing and £900 postage) Council is proposing in future to send a slightly enhanced Officers and Members report which will include a 1 page financial summary but to no longer send the full Trustee report and Financial Summary, this will be available in full online and/or available on request from the Treasurer. To facilitate this change a small amendment is needed to Rule 14 as follows:-

Existing wording – The Treasurer shall keep the accounts of the Society and shall make up the annual Statement of Accounts and Balance Sheet to the 31st December in each year which will be circulated amongst the members with the notice of the Annual General Meeting.

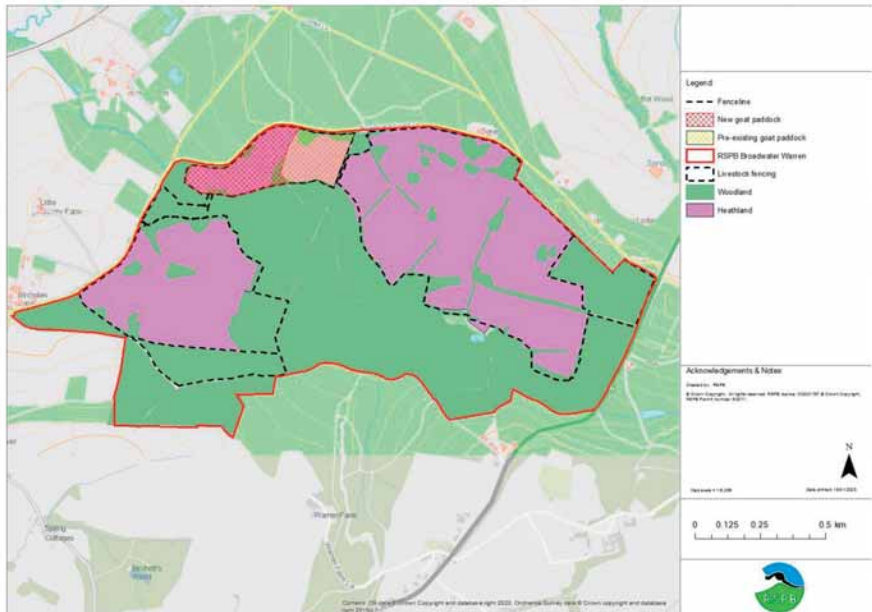
Proposed new wording – The Treasurer shall keep the accounts of the Society and shall make up the Trustees’ Report and Financial Statement to the 31st December in each year. A summary of this report will be included in the Officers & Members report which will be circulated amongst the members with the notice of the Annual General Meeting. A full copy of the report will be available on the Society’s website and members can obtain a full hard copy if required direct from the Treasurer.

Special Resolution was passed unanimously (Proposer Jon Cook, Seconder Val Bentley).

- 6) **RETIRING MEMBERS OF COUNCIL** - Alan Perry (President) and Jonno Cook (Member of Council) are retiring from Council at the AGM having both completed their terms of 10 years and 5 years respectively. Both were thanked for the very valuable contribution they have made during their time on Council. Jonno has agreed to join the M&P committee and so his services will not be lost to the Society.
- 7) **ELECTION OF OFFICERS** – The following Honorary Officers, being eligible without nomination, offer themselves for re-election:- Richard Cowser (Conservation Officer), Ted Merrikin (Treasurer), Matt Twydell (Surveys & Projects Officer), David Campbell (Recorder), Martin Daniel (Newsletter Editor) Mark Mallalieu (Bird Report Editor) and Alan Swetman (Secretary). All re-elected unanimously.
- 8) **ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF COUNCIL** – The following Members of Council, being eligible without nomination offer themselves for re-election:- Mya Brambrick, Jon Curson & Mike Russell. All re-elected unanimously.
- 9) **ELECTION OF PRESIDENT** – Chris Corrigan, proposed by Mike Russell, seconded by Jon Curson was unanimously elected as President.
- 10) **ELECTION OF NEW MEMBER OF COUNCIL** – Katie Nethercoat, proposed by Jonno Cook, seconded by Mike Russell was unanimously elected as a Member of Council.
- 11) **APPOINTMENT OF Kreston Reeves as examiners of the 2022 accounts** – proposed by Richard Cowser, seconded by Mark Mallalieu, Kreston Reeves were unanimously re-elected as examiners of the 2022 accounts.
- 12) **ELECTION OF NEW VICE PRESIDENT** – Alan Perry, proposed by Mike Russell, seconded by Ted Merrikin was unanimously elected as a Vice President of the Society. Following further thanks to Alan for all his work as President over the last 10 years, Val presented him with a ‘Stonechat’ engraved beer mug, apologising for not thinking to fill it up first!
- 13) **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** – there was no other business and the 2022 AGM closed at 15:00.

Goats and Grazing at Broadwater Warren

In April 2022 we introduced goats to Broadwater Warren into 5ha area of the heath to assist with vegetation management. Due to their success in controlling scrub, we decided to extend the area that they were grazing to an additional 6ha. However, in order to facilitate this, we would need to build an additional shelter and handling pen for the goats.



Thanks to Sussex Ornithological Society, that work has now been completed. There are now 16 rare breed goats (Old English, Golden Guernsey and Baggot) at Broadwater, which thanks to the new pen and shelter, can help control vegetation across 2 heathland enclosures totalling 11ha. As well as improving the vegetation structure in these areas, the goats also reduce our herbicide use on the site and have meant that we will no longer need to perform stump treatment.

The goat grazing at Broadwater is still in its proof-of-concept stage, but if the goats continue to perform as expected, we hope to expand the use of goat grazing across the rest of the heathland at Broadwater. So far, they have proved to be more effective than cattle or ponies at controlling scrub, and are more ecologically beneficial to pollinators and the plants upon which they rely than sheep. Overall, the goats have shown that they are effective in controlling scrub and, importantly, do not have a significant impact on nectar sources, thus providing a much better heathland mosaic.

All fenceposts, gate posts and the timber for the shelter were provided from sweet chestnut coppice from RSPB Fore Wood and Broadwater Warren. The labour was provided by RSPB staff and volunteers



Broadwater Warren's goats in their new enclosure

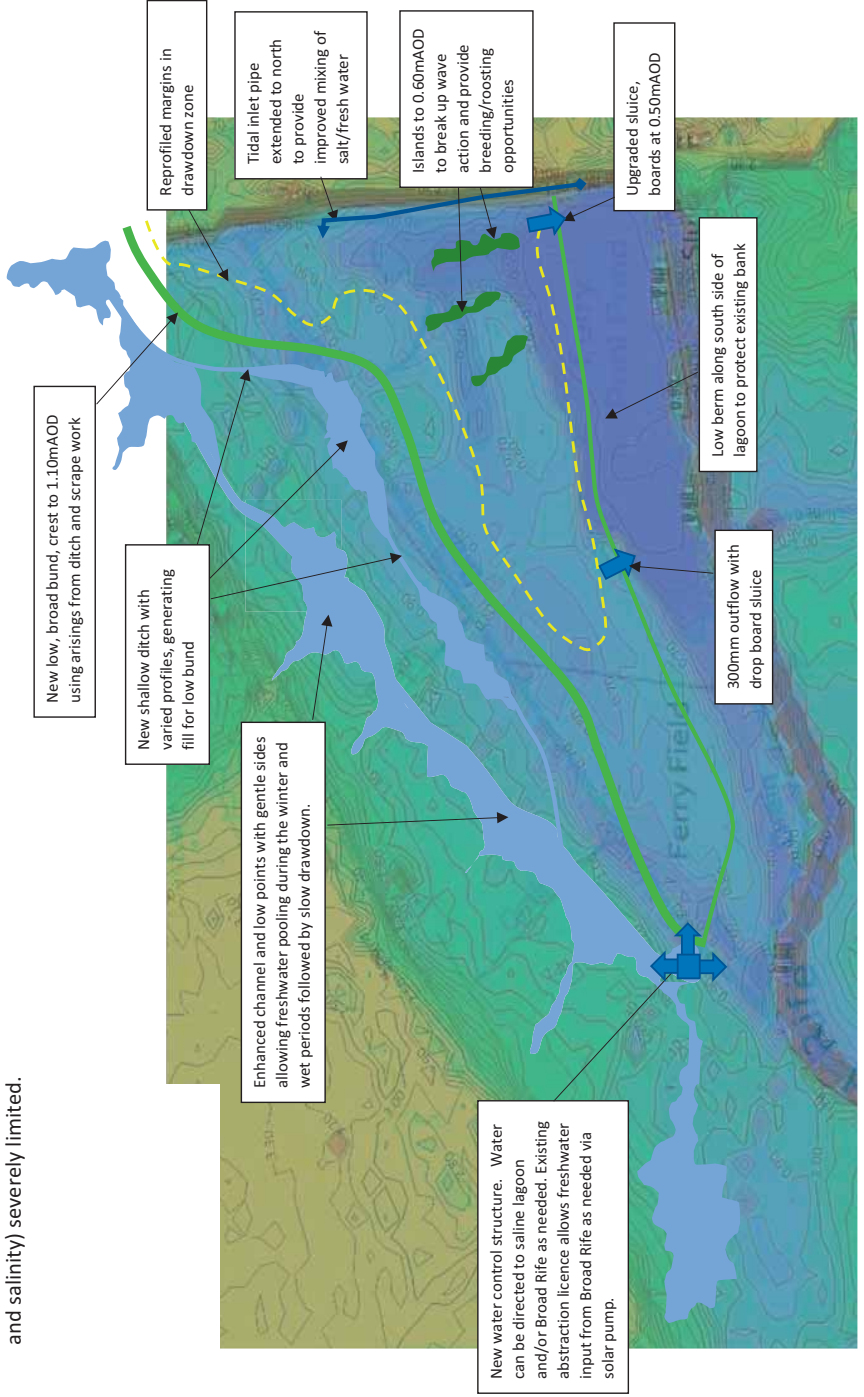


A view of the completed enclosure

Once again, thank you to Sussex Ornithological Society for your support, and for making this project a reality. We're happy to extend an invite for you to attend a site visit at a time and date that suits you, in order for you to see the impact of your donation in person.

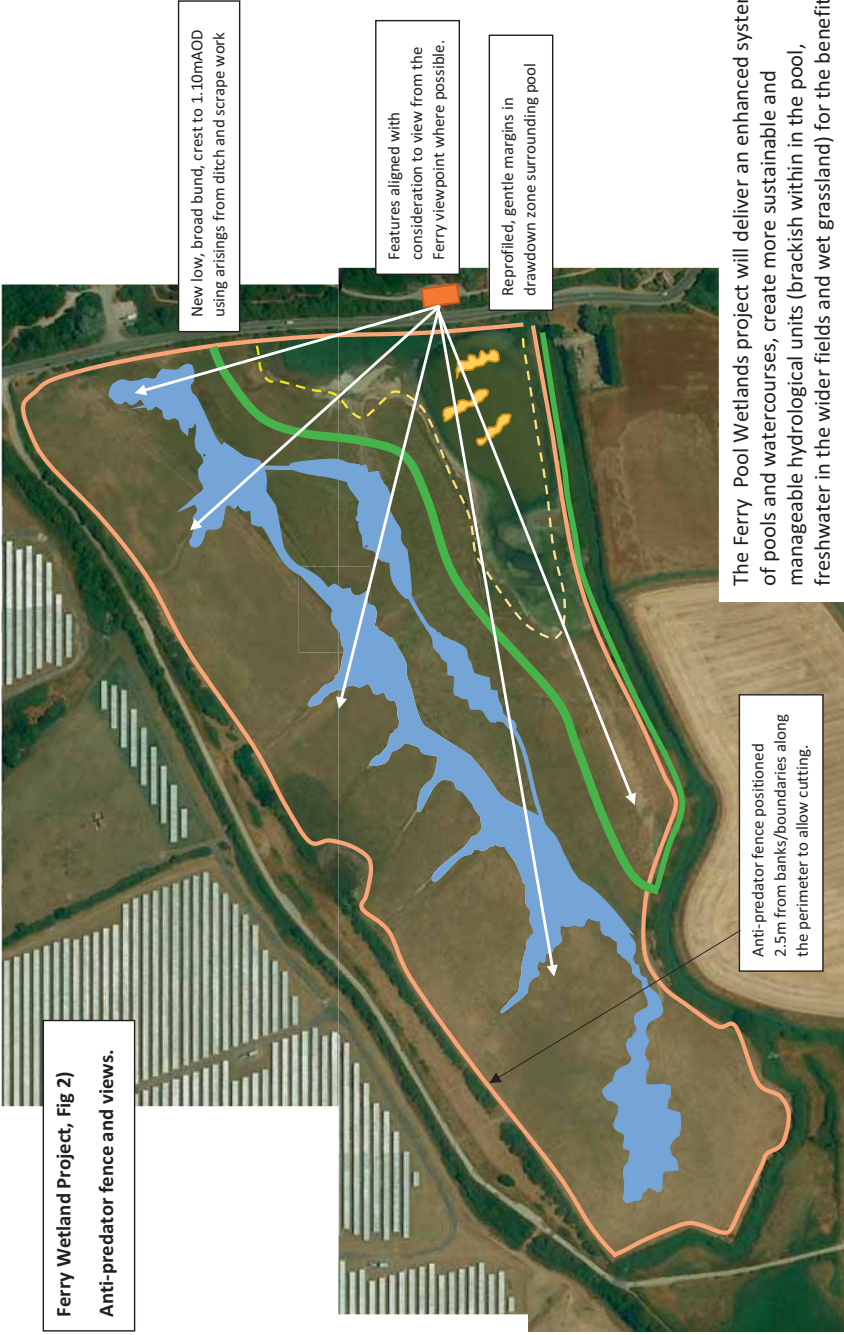


The Ferry Pool and Fields sit at the heart of the Manhood Peninsula's west and eastern wetlands, acting as a connective hub for wetland birds as well as a key feeding and roosting area. Despite the great location and a long history as an important wetland bird site, the site is clearly falling below its ecological potential at present with the ability to manage key factors (such as water levels and salinity) severely limited.



Ferry Wetland Project, Fig 2)

Anti-predator fence and views.



New low, broad bund, crest to 1.10mAOD using arisings from ditch and scrape work

Features aligned with consideration to view from the Ferry viewpoint where possible.

Reprofiled, gentle margins in drawdown zone surrounding pool

Anti-predator fence positioned 2.5m from banks/boundaries along the perimeter to allow cutting.

The Ferry Pool Wetlands project will deliver an enhanced system of pools and watercourses, create more sustainable and manageable hydrological units (brackish within in the pool, freshwater in the wider fields and wet grassland) for the benefit of

breeding and wintering birds, lagoon biodiversity and the visiting public.

This is a necessarily bold project that will not only resolve long standing management limitations, but proactively secure this strategically vital wetland and its designations against the already present and increasing impact of climate change. This project will form part of **Downs to the Sea: Recovery and Resilience in Wetland Habitats**.

