



# NEWSLETTER

## The Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

c/o. 1 Coastguard Cottages, Rye Harbour, Rye, East Sussex,  
TN31 7TS.

Telephone: Rye 3862

A registered charity founded in 1973 to aid in the establishment and maintenance of a nature reserve within the Rye Harbour site of special scientific interest, (known as an SSSI).

Chairman: Ian Rumley-Dawson. Secretary: Clifford Percival. Treasurer: Mr. Pat Bonham.

Committee: Miss Evelyn Stewart, Aubrey Sinden, Bob Greenhalf, Peter Greenhalf.

Warden: Richard Knight. Assistant Warden: Miss Pam Haddon.

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### WARDEN'S REPORT.

Richard Knight.

Autumn and winter allows time to 'relax', the busy often traumatic and exhausting demands of the summer season having come to an end. There is time at last for a few days off! Nature however, never has days off, therefore if a warden takes even a short break away, that puts him behind with the day to day recording, surveying and monitoring as well as the endless paperwork of course. So the autumn and winter is in fact a time for a warden to try to wear his office 'cap' and catch up on that paper work, unfortunately he usually prefers to be outside on the reserve. But the events of the year must be written up in a grand 'Report of the Year' - the comings and goings of the birds and fine details of their nesting; the occurrence of mammals and just about everything else that one has managed to see, hear and do during the year.

Time spent birdwatching is always limited; birdwatching is something most nature reserve wardens do least of all, there just is not the time. More often its people-watching in summer and paper watching in winter. Even so, things are noticed while in the field for other reasons and bird-watchers are always keen to tell me what I have missed while at my desk. As usual *short-eared owls* and *hen harriers* have been regularly seen since mid October, the same time that *redwings* were first heard calling as they passed overhead after dark each evening, arriving from nesting places in North Europe and Russia, to spend the winter months in our milder climate here. A surprise was the arrival in mid October of 3 immature *long-tailed ducks*, which frequented the Ternery Pool throughout November and early December. The 23rd October was a lucky day for a regular watcher who saw a *red kite*, at first circling the area and then gliding off towards Winchelsea. One or two *black redstarts* were present at the end of October and early November, as well as a few *firecrests*. A late returning *common tern* was at Ternery Pool on 7th November and a *swallow* and 3 *sand martins* were noted as late as the 24th November, the same day as a *great-northern diver* on the Long Pit. About this time there were occasional records of a *merlin*, one or two *chiffchaffs*, two *goldeneye* and *scamp* ducks, one *woodcock* and on the 28th a *bittern*, giving November a remarkable mixture of both summer and winter birds.

Another sighting of a *hummingbird hawk moth* on 12th October was the last record for the year of this uncommon day-flying migrant moth. 1982 was the first year in the Reserve's history that this species has been recorded, so we may not see any more here for some years. The occasional *red admiral* butterfly was still to be seen into early November, another migrant insect arriving here in mid summer from Southern Europe to breed. Like the *hummingbird hawk moth*, the *red admiral* is usually unable to withstand our winter climate, so it must fly south in autumn. The few that may remain to try to hibernate, are true pioneers, for survival is rare.

December brought a *red-necked grebe* to the Ternery Pool, a few *jack snipe* among the *snipe*, and over 400 *golden plovers*, even a *yellowhammer* which is a bird that we only see here in winter and then only in very small numbers. Plenty of ducks and wading birds have been present since late summer and the possibility of hard weather in January and February, although not so good for the birds, may increase the numbers and variety of species here on the Reserve, as they will have moved further south and west from the much colder northern and central parts of Europe.

A visit to the Reserve in mid winter is often very rewarding, but be sure to wear plenty of warm clothes!

### COFFEE MORNING.

E. S.

By kind invitation of Miss Phyllis Meek, will be held from 10.00am to noon, on Saturday 30th April 1983 at 'Strettons', Main Street, Iden, Sussex.

There will be a Bring and Buy stall, a Plant stall, as well as information and leaflets about the Friends and the Reserve.

Please come along and support this event in aid of the Friends, and also please give it as much publicity as possible in YOUR area.

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WORK PARTIES.

Pam Haddon.

These will be held on Sunday 13th March 1983; Friday 1st April 1983; Saturday 2nd April 1983; Sunday 4th September 1983; Saturday 8th October 1983.

Please meet in the Martello Tower carpark at Rye Harbour, at 10.00am, or later at the Ternery Pool. Bring lunch, working gloves, rubber boots, suitable tough outdoor clothing and if possible a shovel, spade, rake or garden fork. Just in case there are any interesting species of birds that decide to join the party as well, it is advisable to bring binoculars. There are many different types of tasks to be done, large and small, strenuous and non-strenuous, they ALL help in the important upkeep of the Reserve, so please come along with your energetic friends and donate a few pounds (lbs) for the benefit of the Reserve by exercising your muscles and keeping fit. Thank you.

CONDUCTED WALKS FOR MEMBERS ONLY.

Richard Knight.

Each of these Walks starts from the Information Centre in the Martello Tower carpark at 10.30am and will probably end back there at about 1.30pm. (binoculars are essential):-

Sunday 24th April 1983 = Mrs. Breda Burt will lead the party to the Reserve beach in search of Spring flowers. She is a local botanist and is the Reserve's chief plant recorder, having identified over 200 species on the Reserve.

Sunday 8th May 1983 = Richard Knight (Warden of the Reserve) will lead the party to Ternery Pool looking out for and describing Spring birds. He will be able to relate all the latest arrivals on the Reserve at that time.

RESERVE & FRIENDS PUBLICATIONS & LEAFLETS.

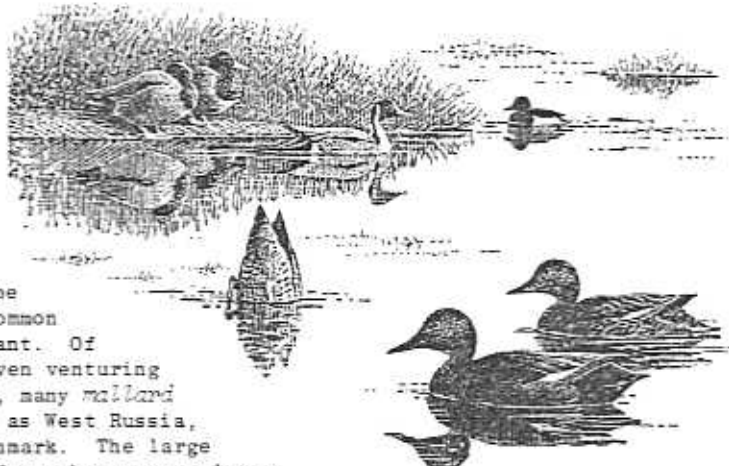
Ian R-D.

Please note that there are several publications and leaflets as well as back copies of the Reserve's Annual Report which are available from the address shown in the heading of this Newsletter. Please remember to enclose a LARGE stamped addressed envelope with your orders and/or enquiries. Thank you.

DUCKS, DUCKS & MORE DUCKS.

Ian R-D.

If you want to study and identify the wide variety of ducks that can be seen in the British Isles, then winter is perhaps the best time to do it, when countless thousands arrive in this country to spend the cold months on our reservoirs and other stretches of open water, especially the Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, where they have now come to know they are safe from guns and other forms of violent disturbance.



Many of these birds will have covered vast distances from their breeding grounds in Europe and the far North. In fact one of our most common species of duck, the *mallard*, is a great migrant. Of course many of them are residents, some not even venturing beyond the fences of the local park. However, many *mallard* that are here now, have come from such places as West Russia, Norway, Sweden, Finland, North Germany and Denmark. The large numbers of *tufted duck* may also have arrived from these same places.

Both of these species also breed here on the Reserve. However, those members who were lucky enough to see the *long-tailed ducks* around the Reserve in November, would have to go very much further north to see them breeding in the wild - to the windswept tundra grounds of the Arctic, where their strange long drawn-out 'Aooooagh' call yodells out across the barren grounds. They are perhaps the most musical sounds of any duck, and have given rise to their other quaint name of *Old Squaw*. Their mating displays in early Spring on the tundra pools among the melting ice is also spectacular, as the males perform aggressive chases both in the air, on the water and under water, the latter just like speeding torpedos, as the white parts on their bodies may glisten against the ice as they speed along under a small section of surface ice, only to reappear above the water in some other section of the pool with a loud triumphant call which echos out across the frozen landscape.

Probably one of the easiest ducks to identify in flight is the *shoveler*, by its extremely wide bill which is used for filter feeding on the surface of the water, sifting out the micro organisms in a similar way to the baleen whales, although of course the *shoveler* only has tiny grooves in the sides of each mandible and it will also eat other types of food as well, such as seeds and plants.

Other visitors to our winter waters include the *pin-tail* which mainly breeds in Norway, Sweden and Russia, but may go as far south as North Africa to winter. Perhaps most people's favourite duck when they see it at Ternery Pool is the tiny *teal*, which often gets overlooked when it is standing on the shingle banks, because of its superb camouflage which consists of patches of colour that help to break up the outline of the bird's body and therefore make it more difficult to see, but once you have lined your binoculars onto the little chestnut brown head with the bright metallic green eye-patch - it is a bird you will not forget. Yes, the winter winds ARE worth facing to see all these duck and many more.