



NEWSLETTER

The Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

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Telephone: Rye (0797) 223862

A registered charity founded in 1973 to aid in the establishment and maintenance of the Nature Reserve within the Rye Harbour Site of Special Scientific Interest, (known as the SSSI).

CHAIRMAN: Ian Rumley-Dawson. VICE CHAIRMAN: Clifford Percival. TREASURER: Pat Bonham.
SECRETARY: Miss Liz Blackwell. MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Peter Philpot.
COMMITTEE: Steve Denny, Bob Greenhalf, Peter Greenhalf, Frank Palmer, Mrs. Anne Yates,
Dr. Barry Yates.

SUMMER - AUTUMN 1986 .

NUMBER 24 .

WARDEN'S REPORT.

Dr. Barry Yates.

As the days are now shortening I can look back on a very interesting spring and summer, with successes and failures in breeding birds and some unusual visitors.

After a second cold winter, the breeding numbers of Lapwing and Little Grebe were greatly depleted, and with the cold, lingering spring, many of the early breeders had little success. The cold weather set back the spring about two weeks here at Rye Harbour. So for the early nesters, such as Lapwing, there was little plant cover and little food, therefore success was very poor. Not until mid-June did the temperature reach 20°C and then the season rapidly caught up, with a flush of insects, flowers and young animals.

At Ternery Pool there was always much activity and noise, with a further increase in breeding numbers of the Black-headed Gull to over 1,000 pairs, but this was not a bad thing, as I consider it to be the main reason for the first successful nesting season of Sandwich Terns here. About 40 pairs of these large terns nested within the gull colony on one of the islands created several years ago. With the safety provided by this island and the gulls, these terns raised over 50 young. Similar success was achieved by 65 pairs of Common Tern, but in great contrast the Little Terns had a very poor year. After the delay of a late season, about 70 pairs of this, our most important breeding species, attempted nesting along the whole length of the protected area of shingle beach. Despite the electric fencing, there were many nest losses at the time when Fox cubs were becoming independent, and during July nearly all nests were lost. At most, all that can be hoped for are 8 flying young Little Terns this year.

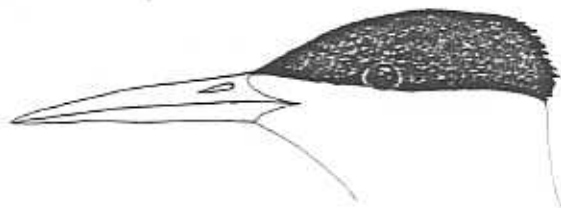
Similar losses were experienced by the breeding Ringed Plovers and Oystercatchers, but some of these losses were due to Crows hunting over the areas in which Lapwings normally provide protection.

Meanwhile, down on the Wader Pool where it has lived up to its name; there have been 16 species of wading birds including Temminck's Stint, Little Stint, Greenshank and for several weeks in May and June a pair of Avocets. The presence of these large graceful black and white birds demonstrated how much food there was already in the shallow water. It has also attracted ducks such as Shelduck, Mallard, Shoveler, Teal and Garganey.

Other exciting birds around the Reserve this summer were a Lesser-crested Tern (rather like a Sandwich Tern with a yellowish bill - see drawing above), a male Red-backed Shrike, an Osprey and a male Kentish Plover.

Wardening the Reserve from our new cottage has been much more effective and satisfying this year, because of the great advantage of overlooking the Reserve. Now from the cottage windows or garden I can check for disturbance or watch out for birds passing by (86 species so far). Living within the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) has further emphasised to me the great importance of the area to all species of wildlife and the value of it to those people who are able to come and carefully observe it.

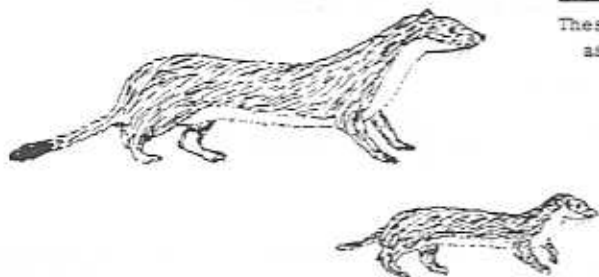
Much of my work over the year will go unnoticed, there is no instant return for all the effort, but I am rewarded by the variety of wildlife that can be seen, and by the comments of visitors as they see the different plants and animals for the first time. It is also rewarding to know that there are so many "Friends" who actively support the Reserve and share my enjoyment of it.



*Lesser-crested Tern
at Rye Harbour 13th May 1986*

STOAT AND WEASEL.

B.Y.



These two mammals are frequently seen around the Reserve, often as they are just disappearing into cover, so they may be confused. Stoats are the most frequently seen; a favourite site is around the Wader Pool, where alarming birds often draw attention to them. They are up to 400mm long, with a distinctly long tail, whereas the Weasel is very much smaller, only 250mm long, with a shorter tail. The tail can be the main clue to identification with the Weasel being plain brown, and the Stoat's has a black tip. In the north of the country the winter coat of the Stoat is white, except for the black tail tip. This is known as "ermine".

The food of the two species is also very different, with the Weasel favouring small mammals such as voles, whereas the Stoat favours rabbits and small birds. If you see one of these species out in the open, watch it carefully because when hunting they move rapidly and repeatedly disappear, usually reappearing with their prey.

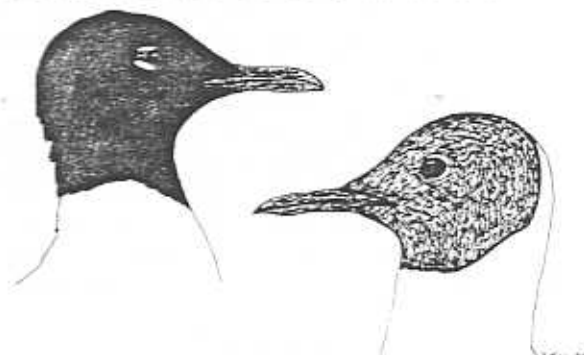
DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

- 24th August : COFFEE MORNING at Winchelsea Beach Village Hall. Please publicise this event as much as possible amongst your friends and neighbours. It will take the form of a bring and buy and sale of cakes and other goodies. Donated items would be welcome - to Barry Yates at Watch Cottage, or bring them along on the day. Starts 10.00am.
- Sunday
- 30th August : TERN WATCHERS EVENING 7.30pm in Winchelsea Beach Village Hall. Latest report of the season by the Warden, other items of interest including refreshments.
- Saturday
- 6th September : CHARITY AUCTION in aid of the Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve. In the Winchelsea Beach Village Hall. Goods accepted = from 10am to 12 noon; Viewing = 12 noon to 2.00pm; Auction starts = 2.00pm. See further details on leaflet enclosed with this Newsletter. Please display the leaflet in your nearest shop window, library, church hall, or information board, so that we gain as much publicity as possible for this event which we hope will prove to be rather rewarding for the Friends as well as yourself. Please help us to make it a success by bringing along good quality items for auction - you might get more for them than you thought!
- Saturday
- 21st September : WORK PARTY. Meet at 10.00am at the Information Centre or later out on the Reserve. Bring along rubber boots, spade or garden fork, gardening gloves, lunch and binoculars.
- Sunday
- 4th & 5th : WILDLIFE IN AUTUMN. Weekend Course at Pyke House in Battle, East Sussex, led by Ian Rumley-Dawson. Further details and bookings contact Mr. Peter Birch (Centre Manager), Hastings College of Arts & Technology, Pyke House, Upper Lake, Battle, East Sussex. Phone = Battle (04246) 2495.
- October
- Sat. & Sun.
- 19th October : FRIENDS AUTUMN WALK. Meet at 10.00am at the Information Centre at Rye Harbour. Bring lunch and binoculars etc. for 5 mile walk around the Reserve, the Wood and the large Gravel Pits.
- Sunday
- 6th December : FRIENDS WINTER WALK. Meet at 10.00am at the Information Centre at Rye Harbour. Bring lunch and binoculars etc. for a walk around the Reserve, especially to see winter wildfowl.
- Saturday

THE GULLS WITH BLACK HEADS.

B.Y.

The Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) is a very common bird on the Reserve throughout the year, but only in the spring and summer does it have its "black hood". However, a close look will reveal a chocolate brown hood in actual fact. The true black-headed gull is a larger, altogether more impressive, and aggressive bird, the Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*). The scientific name actually means black-headed. The hood of this species is very black and more extensive, and is shown off to good effect with a bright red bill. In recent years there has been an increase in numbers in spring in Britain of this larger bird, with a very few pairs breeding. At Rye Harbour it is an occasional spring and summer visitor and perhaps, one day, a pair may settle to breed here among the Black-headed Gulls.



Mediterranean Gull

Black-headed Gull

SALES GOODS.

Available from the Warden or at some of the Friends events.

- Postcards (River Mouth, Little Tern, Pintail or Hare) = 10p each or 12 for £1
- Notelets with matching envelopes = pack of 5 for £1
- Tea Towels (depicting a variety of animals and plants of the Reserve) = £1.95 each.
- Mugs (showing name of the Reserve with animals and plants) = £1.95 each.
- Plant List (revised April 1986) = 50p each.
- Annual Report 1984 = £1 Annual Report 1985 (just printed in August 1986) = £1
