



NEWSLETTER

The Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

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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.

TREASURER: David Marshall.

SECRETARY: Miss Liz Blackwell. MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Peter Philpot.

COMMITTEE: Steve Denny, Bob Greenhalf, Peter Greenhalf, Frank Palmer, Mrs. Anne Yates, Dr. Barry Yates.

WINTER 1988/89

NUMBER 31

WARDEN'S REPORT.

Dr. Barry Yates.

The Autumn period was very eventful with a wealth of birds passing through the Reserve. Most species appeared in good numbers suggesting that breeding had been generally good. The only species that were noticeable by their low numbers were ARCTIC SKUAS, SHORT-EARED OWLS and GREENFINCHES! For most of September it was possible to find BLACK-NECKED GREBE and SLAVONIAN GREBE, two species that need careful scrutiny in their Winter plumage. Duck numbers steadily increased at Ternery Pool, with TEAL reaching over 200 (see illustration at right), and SHOVELER over 80. While down in the Wood, there was a steady stream of passage SISKIN, REDPOLL and GOLDCREST, and on the 17th September a RED-BREADED FLYCATCHER.

October brought several BEWICK'S SWAN, a FERRUGINOUS DUCK, many WATER RAILS (as illustrated below left), small flocks of BLACK REDSTART and several RING OUZELS (all while I was on holiday! So this latter species remains one of those that I have not seen here on the Reserve). It often happens that when you find a rare bird, another shortly follows but on the 1st October, I saw three new species for my "Rye Harbour List": YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER, COAL TIT and JAY!!!

In November the number of ducks at Ternery Pool remained high, but the variety increased considerably with up to 32 GADWALL, 14 SCAUP, 2 LONG-TAILED DUCK, 5 GOLDENEYE.

On one memorable day, 12th November, all at the same time at Ternery Pool there was a MERLIN, a HEN HARRIER and a PEREGRINE. However, I was not always lucky, on the 5th despite being out on the Reserve, I missed a RED KITE and a HOODED CROW.

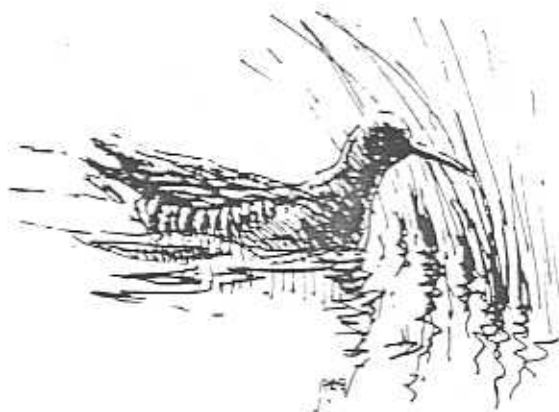
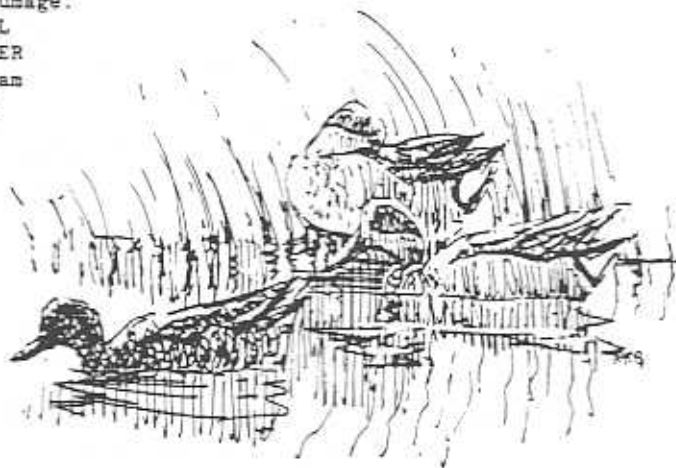
Already we have had several hard frosts with a fringing of ice around Ternery Pool, and many "Northern" birds have appeared early or in good numbers, so perhaps we are in for another cold Winter in the months to come. One species that must have suffered badly in the recent run of cold Winters is the WREN, but after just one mild Winter its numbers seem to have recovered. Everywhere I go there seem to be WRENS, in the shed, in the wood pile, on the beach and even under the hides!

NOVEMBER'S GUIDED WALK.

The last Guided Walk of the year coincided with the last day of a long period of clear settled weather, which although cold, provided a good light to appreciate the birds that we saw.

Leaving the Carpark at 1.05pm, 18 Friends started the walk to Ternery Pool. It was a rather bad start, just missing a pair of STONECHATS feeding on the Saltmarsh. Matters did not improve much with an almost birdless walk through the Caravan site and across the fields to the Parkes Hide, where the light was against us, very pretty, but not letting us see the colours of the ducks and proving to be very tiring on the eyes.

Very soon we walked to the shore to look across a flat, calm sea to some small dots in the distance. With binoculars we could just see some details of them, but through the several telescopes available in the group, we were able to watch a fishing boat followed by a mass of gulls - mostly HERRING GULLS, but also a number



of KITTIWAKES distinctively smaller and flying with stiff black tipped wings. When we turned our attention to the ducks out on the sea, we found MALLARD, WIGEON, TEAL and COMMON SCOTER, as well as some GREAT-CRESTED GREBES and a SLAVONIAN GREBE amongst them.

At the extended Crittall Hide there was sufficient seating for the whole group at once, and we were treated to fine views of some scarce birds among the more common species. TEAL numbered 250, and there were many MALLARD, WIGEON and GADWALL. More elusive were the ducks that seemed to dive as soon as you focussed onto them - a few immature GOLDENEYE and a superb adult male with glossy green head and large white cheek spot, then a duck sitting very low in the water with a mostly white head and diving with open wings - a LONG-TAILED DUCK. However, the best birds were still to be found and they all appeared in a flourish. First that most elusive of species a JACK SNIPE standing close to a COMMON SNIPE, provided a clear comparison, then we had a good view of an active WATER RAIL and also at the same time a SPOTTED REDSHANK flew in - we just did not know which way to look next as there was so much happening at once!!

After all this excitement we returned to the shore where a few of us waited for the arrival of roosting waders - first a few small groups of DUNLIN, TURNSTONE and GREY PLOVER, then as the sun set over the cliffs at Fairlight, the first large flights of CURLEW arrived from PETT LEVEL and Romney Marsh. Truly an amazing sight. By this time there was a distinct chill in the air, so we ended a most enjoyable birdwatching afternoon with a brisk walk back to the Carpark, certainly a day to remember at Rye Harbour.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

- 5th February: Pub lunch, then short walk around the Reserve. Meet at the William Conqueror Pub at Rye Sunday Harbour from 1.00pm onwards. Depart for walk from the Information Centre at 2.00pm.
- 24th March: Work Party with the Sussex Ornithological Society to carry out essential management tasks at Good Friday Ternery Pool, especially weeding of nesting islands. Meet at 10.00am at Information Centre or later at Ternery Pool. Bring lunch, binoculars, garden tools particularly forks.
- 29th April: Long Walk (6 miles) in search of early migrant birds and flowers. Meet at Information Centre Saturday at 2.00pm.
- 6th May: Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, at 7.30pm in the Saturday Winchelsea Beach Village Hall, Sea Road, Winchelsea Beach, East Sussex. The AGM will be followed by an illustrated lecture, details of which will be announced in the next edition of this Newsletter.
- 28th May: BIRDWATCH 89 in collaboration with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, as part of Sunday their Centenary Year, this countrywide event will help to make people more aware of the tremendous wealth of wildlife that can be seen during the Spring in Britain. Further details nearer the time.

RECORDS FOR 1988 PLEASE.

Barry Yates.

A nature reserve has several important functions such as:-

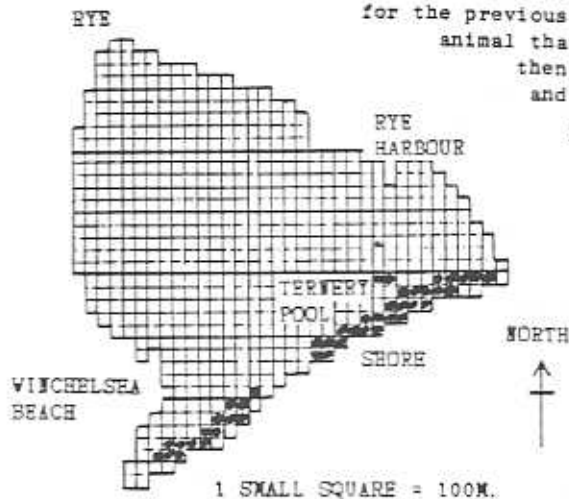
- a) Recording and study of the areas natural history.
- b) Management of the habitat to encourage a diversity of species, especially those considered to be rare.
- c) To increase public awareness and appreciation of all forms of wildlife.

It is at this time of year that a large part of my time is spent collating the records for the previous year. Therefore if you have any interesting records of any plant or animal that you have seen or studied during the year within the Rye Harbour SSSI, then could you please write to me describing the species, giving the date and place of your observations, as well as any special or unusual aspects

IF YOU DO NOT MAKE ANY RECORD OF WHAT YOU SEE, OR MAYBE FEEL THAT YOU CANNOT CONTRIBUTE THIS TIME, THEN PLEASE MAKE A NEW YEARS RESOLUTION TO DO SO IN FUTURE. THANK YOU, IT ALL HELPS.

Keeping notes will add a whole new dimension to your visits to the Reserve. In order to help encourage members in this work, I would like to start a series of monthly field meetings (of limited numbers) for those people who are willing to contribute to the study and recording of natural history within the SSSI. Please write to me if you are interested and I will distribute details.

An example of what can be achieved with some guidance and only a little experience is the greater understanding of the distribution of the plants of the SSSI. A few interested people have participated in the mapping scheme so that preliminary maps are available for several easily identified species. The example illustrated on the left is the SEA PEA (*Lathyrus japonicus*); which is described as a primary coloniser of shingle beaches, often forming extensive pure patches. It is obvious from this map how dependent the species is on the proximity to the sea, because bare shingle more than 500 meters from the shore is not colonised.



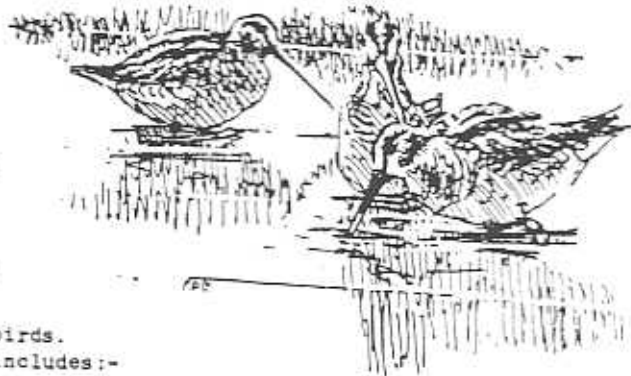
All the bird illustrations herein are by Bob Greenhalf.

DEVELOPMENTS AROUND THE RESERVE.

The Craft Bazzarr held at the end of August 1988 was very well supported and raised over £500 for the Reserve. Thank you everyone who produced items or helped on the day. The proceeds of the day have funded the new extension to the Crittall Hide which is now completed. It has 10 viewing slots and will seat 20 people comfortably at the front. Additional seating at the rear will take another 8 people. This means that hopefully visiting groups will not so readily swamp the Reserve's facilities.

The Wader Pool is continuing to be popular with the wading birds. The list of species recorded there so far numbers 27 which includes:-

- OYSTERCATCHER, AVOCET, LITTLE RINGED PLOVER, RINGED PLOVER, GOLDEN PLOVER,
- GREY PLOVER, LAPWING, KNOT, LITTLE STINT, TEMMINCK'S STINT, PECTORAL SANDPIPER,
- DUNLIN, RUFF, JACK SNIPPE, SNIPPE (as illustrated top right), BLACK-TAILED GODWIT, BAR-TAILED GODWIT, WHIMBREL, CURLEW, SPOTTED REDSHANK, REDSHANK, GREENSHANK, GREEN SANDPIPER, WOOD SANDPIPER, COMMON SANDPIPER, TURNSTONE, and GREY PHALAROPE.



There has recently been another slight modification to the Pool with a mechanical digger to create more areas of shallow water. This proved to be immediately successful because next day it attracted the latest addition to the list which was the GREY PHALAROPE.



As you are sitting in the Wader Pool hide of course you may see plenty of other birds nearby. Probably one of the most interesting was the SHORT-EARED OWL (illustrated on the left) which was watched for quite a long time just after the hide had been completed. This bird was flying back and forth very close to the ground, as it was hunting for small mammals amongst the large grass area to the southwest of the Pool. Several times it flopped down into a grass tussock, only to re-appear a second or two later. Then another pounce, this time a bit nearer the Pool, so that as the bird lifted off again we could clearly see a mouse hanging from its talons. However, after a short flight to a grassy knoll, the bird left its catch there and flew off again into the distance. It had probably stored this item of food in a cache or larder, ready for collection later, perhaps on some dull rainy day when hunting would not be so easy.

Other animals will also do this to help them through lean periods, such as FOXES which may have several different hiding places for their food.

The noticeboard in the Parkes Hide was damaged during last Summer and it was not replaced. Certainly the bird pictures have been missed, as they often help beginners to identify some of our birds. Mr. P. Scott of Tunbridge Wells, has kindly donated funds for a new, larger and stronger board. It should be completed by the time you read this report. Our grateful thanks to Mr. Scott for his very kind gesture.

HIGH-TECH.

Ian R-D.

No, this is not a new species of Arctic wader seen on the Reserve! It is the fact that with so many members now belonging to the Friends, as at 30th December 1988 = 1000, we need to speed up our methods of addressing Newsletters etc.. Therefore we are now using computerised labels which are generated from the Reserve's own in-house computer, which is kept by Barry Yates at Watch Cottages. Your name and address are only held on a disc for use by the Friends Committee and will NOT be used for any other purpose. The Data Protection Act states that we should advise our members of this fact. Therefore if you do not want us to keep your name and address in this way, then please let Peter Philpot know. Similarly, please examine the address on the envelope which enclosed this Newsletter and if it is wrong, then please advise Peter Philpot. Certainly this computer makes our job much easier and is quicker to up-date.

BIRD STAMPS.

Ian R-D.

Four special stamps to commemorate the RSPB's centenary will be issued by the Royal Mail on 17th January, which show:- PUFFIN 19p AVOCET 27p OYSTERCATCHER 32p GANNET 35p.

The Post Office is publishing a first day cover of the complete set of stamps, which will provide a lasting memento and a colourful record of these interesting species, two of which are regularly to be seen at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve - the OYSTERCATCHER which is a familiar sight every day and breeds here, while the AVOCET is seen each Spring and Autumn as it passes through on migration.

The RSPB is also publishing its own first day cover which will be hand stamped at Sandy, Bedfordshire, see further details in the Winter edition of the RSPB Birds Magazine.

THE END