



NEWSLETTER

The Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

2 Watch Cottages, Nook Beach, Winchelsea, East Sussex, TN36 4LU.

Telephone: Rye (0797) 223862

A registered charity (number 269535) founded in 1973 to aid in the establishment and management of the Nature Reserve within the Rye Harbour Site of Special Scientific Interest, (known as the SSSI).

CHAIRMAN: Ian Rumley-Dawson.

SECRETARY: Miss Liz Blackwell.

TREASURER: Stefan Wiener.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Peter Philpot

COMMITTEE: Jill Barry, Steve Denny, Bob Greenhalf, Peter Greenhalf, Frank Palmer,
Mike Saville, Mrs. Anne Yates.

WARDEN: Dr. Barry Yates.

ASSISTANT WARDEN: Dominic Funnell.

SUMMER / AUTUMN 1991.

NUMBER 39.

WARDEN'S REPORT.

Barry Yates.

For period from May 1991 to July 1991.

Disappointing is one description of the weather that we have endured this spring and summer, another is wet and cool!!

May was the coolest on record, (Reserve records go back to 1977), with a mean maximum temperature of 14.2 C (1977-1990 average was 15.9 C), while June was the wettest with 128.5mm (1977-1990 average 54.5mm) and cool with a mean maximum temperature of 17.0 C (1977-1990 average 18.5 C). Consequently, most birds had poor breeding success, but the Little Terns have done well (see below), as did many of the shingle plants (also see below).

Looking back over the spring, the migration of birds was almost halted in April by a prolonged, cool, northerly airstream which continued for most of May. For some species there were very few records, for instance my count of the number of Sand Martins seen in the spring did not reach double figures! There were, however, many interesting sightings, which are summarised below.

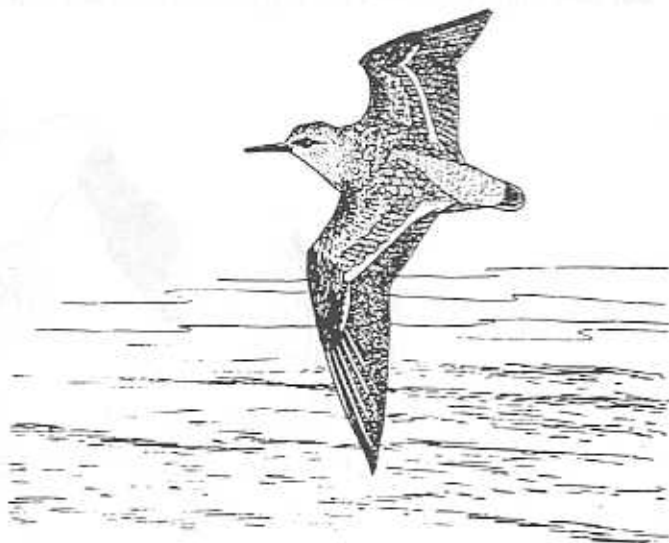
MARCH.

Montagu's Harrier 1 on 30th; Iceland Gull 1 on 18th; Sandwich Tern first on 12th; Yellow Wagtail first on 29th; Wheatear first on 14th.

APRIL.

Red-breasted Merganser 6 offshore on 24th; Goshawk 1 on 29th; Little Tern first on 11th; Cuckoo first on 23rd; Swift first on 23rd; Sand Martin first on 1st; Swallow first on 11th; House Martin first on 26th; Sedge Warbler first on 10th; Reed Warbler first on 28th; Whitethroat first on 21st.

KNOT



MAY.

Spoonbill 1 on 20th; Little Egret 1 on 11th and 26th; Brent Goose 2 until 26th; Velvet Scoter 3-4 offshore on 4th; Temminck's Stint 1-2 from 21st - 23rd; Jack Snipe last seen on 1st; Whimbrel roost maximum 410 on 2nd; Least Tern first heard on 25th; Nightingale 1 on 24th and 27th; Savi's Warbler 1 singing 24th and 25th.

JUNE.

Common Eider 1 at River Mouth from 15th; Osprey 2 offshore on 7th; Stone Curlew 1 on 20th; Roseate Tern 1-3 from 6th to 13th; Lesser Crested Tern 1 at dusk 16th.

JULY.

Least Tern last heard on 19th; Bee-eater 1 on 3rd.

BREEDING BIRDS.

The Little Terns had a good season, despite the very worst weather. The 48-50 pairs (40 last year) nested mainly within the West Beach fence near the Old Lifeboat Station. There was an early loss of 10 nests one night to a Fox, but thereafter most nests hatched. Bad weather and a Kestrel accounted for some chicks, but about 35 successfully flew. An additional protection measure was put experimentally around 10 nests, consisting of a wire netting enclosure that allows adults to fly on and off the nest, but does not allow ground predators to get to the eggs. Success of the method was quite good and could be vital in a year when Foxes might decimate the rest of the colony.

The other nesting terns did very badly. Common Tern numbers were down to just 45 pairs (90 last year) and these raised less than 5 young. Most losses were put down to a combination of the wet and windy weather and the very long vegetation on the island (resulting from the wet weather). Sandwich Terns did briefly nest, but the two pairs failed soon after the start of incubation.

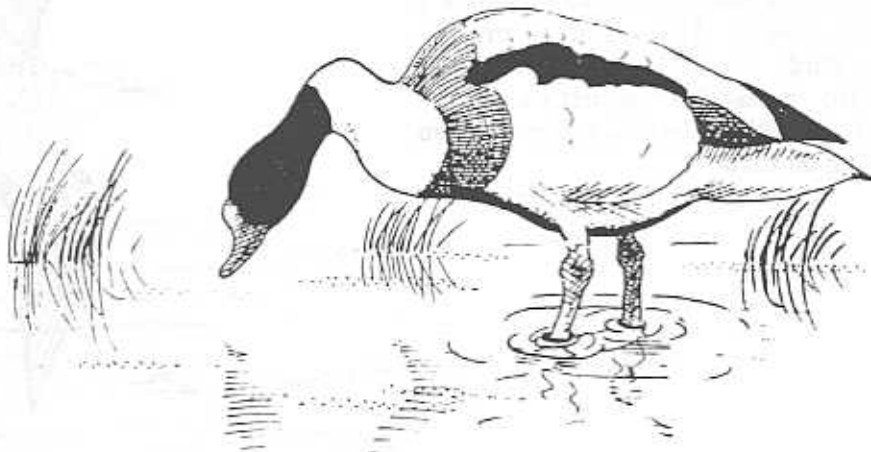
The breeding waders of the Reserve also had a very poor season with chicks growing slowly and suffering a high mortality because of wet, windy weather and a poor food supply.

FLOWERS OF THE SHINGLE.

With the cold weather came a late first flowering of many species.

	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>
Sea Kale	23rd April	17th May
Viper's Bugloss	21st May	1st June
Yellow-horned Poppy	19th May	5th June
Sea Pea	9th May	23rd May
Biting Stonecrop	3rd June	23rd June

The many specialised plants of the shingle normally endure drought conditions for much of the growing season, but this year, just as the ground was drying up in late April, the rain came and enabled many species to produce a long lasting colourful display. Most noticeable were the Viper's Bugloss, Yellow-horned Poppy and Sea Kale, but most important was the large number of our Nationally rare plant, the Least Lettuce.



In four study areas the average density of Least Lettuce plants was 244, 84, 226 and 56 per square metre and the total number of plants on the Reserve was estimated at around 50,000 - making this the most important site in Britain for this species. Another study has been looking closely at the flora in a 10m. x 10m. area of shingle over three years. Last year I reported the dramatic decline of most species following the flooding by the sea. However, this year, there has been a recovery.

	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>
Herb Robert	1359	1	532
Sticky Groundsel	607	13	1854
Red Hempnettle	105	0	318
Sea Kale	46	34	40
Woody Nightshade	24	12	15
Groundsel	41	0	0
Danish Scurvy Grass	7	9	37
Sea Pea (growth area)	4.5 sq.m.	3.5 sq.m.	4.5 sq.m.

PETT POOLS PROJECT.

Once again, local members of the SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY have organised the draining of the roadside pool at Pett Level, near the shore and just 3 miles west of the Reserve. There will be an Information Point there at weekends and there are usually people around to help identify the more difficult species. This pool is easily viewed from the roadside without even having to get out of your vehicle. It provides a valuable feeding area for a great variety of waders migrating from their northern breeding grounds. The cost of pumping the pool is covered by donations from some local wildlife societies as well as by the production of an Annual Report which is available at the pool or from Barry Yates (£1 plus A4 size s.a.e.).

THE WADER POOL.

The work on extending our Wader Pool began in March this year and, after much landscaping, the activity ceased for the bird's breeding season. Progress on obtaining a good water tight seal has been slow and we are in need of another large quantity of mud to plug some major leaks. We have an endless supply of ideal mud nearby in the River Rother, but we are dependent upon other people's plans for the excavation and transport of the mud. As a result the Wader Pool has not been as attractive to look at as it could and will be, although it had many birds nesting around and in it and some plants are beginning to colonise the new area.

ANNUAL REPORT.

The 1990 Annual Report is available from the Warden (£1.50 plus A5 size s.a.e.) It contains articles on Camber Castle, Birds, Mammals, Moths and a review of the year, including a weather summary. It also contains details of the Establishment of the Reserve, its Management Committee and Finances.

POPPY SEEDS.

David Yates.

In our garden at Watch Cottage there are many different colours and types of Poppy. They like poor, well drained soil. To raise money for the Nature Reserve, I can send you a thimble full of mixed Poppy seed in return for 50p and a s.a.e..

DIARY OF EVENTS 1991.

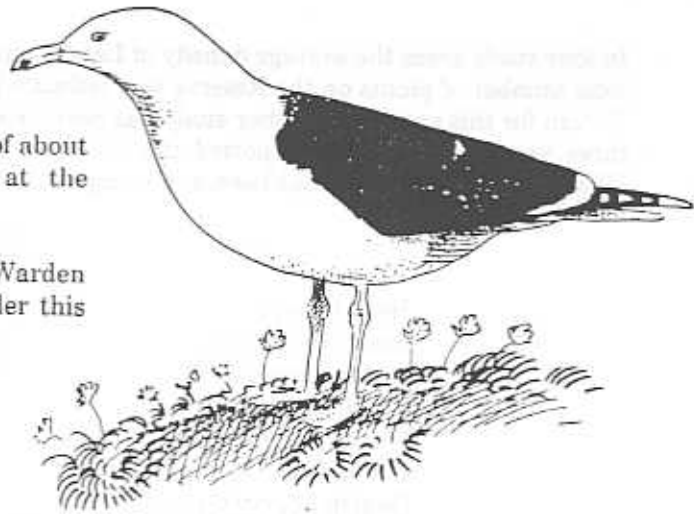
The following three guided walks are all circular routes of about 3 miles, visiting TERNERY POOL and will begin at the Information Centre in the Rye Harbour car park.

All Friends SALES ITEMS will be available from the Warden before and after the walks, so perhaps you could consider this for some of your Christmas shopping.

Tuesday, 10th September 1991, 9am to 1pm.

Sunday, 6th October 1991, 9am to 12 noon.

Saturday, 7th December 1991, 10am to 1pm.



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HURRAY FOR COVENANTS.

Peter Philpot.

Having now submitted two claims to the Inland Revenue on behalf of the Friends covenanted subscriptions, the first being for £863 and the most recent for £1072, I am beginning to realise just how valuable this form of subscription is to the Friends.

This extra funding, which I hope will remain over the one thousand pounds mark, comes to us at absolutely no extra cost to our subscribers and the forms only take about five minutes to fill in. So why don't more of you consider this easy way of increasing our funds? Covenant forms for subscriptions of £5 or more are available from me, just fill in your name and address in the space below and send it to me (with a s.a.e.) and you can increase the value of your subscription by one third. However, you do have to be paying income tax for us to benefit.

To: Mr. Peter Philpot (FRHNR Membership Secretary),
Broad Water, The Ridge, Winchelsea Beach, East Sussex, TN36 4LU.

FRIENDS OF RYE HARBOUR NATURE RESERVE

I would like to pay my annual subscription of £5 (or more) to the Friends in future by Covenant, so please send me a Covenant Form and a Bankers Order Form. I enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

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