



# The Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

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A registered charity (No.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:** Michael Saville

**TREASURER:** Frank Clarke

**COMMITTEE:** Steve Denny, Bob Greenhalf, Peter Greenhalf, Frank Palmer,  
Stefan Wiener, Anne Yates (Tern Watch Organiser)

**WARDEN:** Dr. Barry Yates

**SECRETARY:** Miss Liz Blackwell

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY:** Peter Philpot

**ASSISTANT WARDEN:** Dominic Funnell.

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WINTER 1993 NEWSLETTER

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## WARDEN'S REPORT

### JULY 1993

Generally a quiet month with few highlights. Most of the interest was at Ternery Pool, where waders trickled through with first Common Sandpiper (7th), single Little Ringed Plovers (from 12th), single Ruff (15th), Curlew Sandpiper (20th), Green Sandpiper (28th). Other birds of note included a single Black Tern at Ternery Pool (1st), an immature Little Gull at Castle Water (2nd and 4th), a Mediterranean Gull (9th), Peregrine (17th), Kingfisher (21st). The highlight of the month was a female Ruddy Shelduck of unknown origin seen at Ternery Pool on 4 dates throughout the month.



### AUGUST 1993

A month that was perhaps more notable for some of the species not recorded than for anything else. Little Terns were not recorded at all (although there was a late record of 2 on September 9th) and waders were very scarce throughout. Other sightings included Little Gull (7th), Garganey (11th), and in Rye Bay single Great Skua and Pomarine Skua. The two best records of the month were of an adult male Red-footed Falcon flying over the Warden's Cottage and a Grey Squirrel there on 21st (the first record of this species for the reserve).

### SEPTEMBER 1993

A much more exciting month with a good variety of species, although waders were still only in very small numbers, for example, the maximum Dunlin count at Ternery Pool was just 20. The peak count of Cormorants so far this year was of 142 including 6 colour ringed birds. Passerines were well represented with many of the common warblers, especially Lesser Whitethroats, in the Wood throughout the month, up to 3 Redstarts, one of which was a superb adult male and single Black Redstarts on four dates. Raptors also showed well with several records of Peregrine, Sparrowhawk, Hobby, Marsh Harrier. Wader highlights included up to 6 Little Stints, 2 Curlew Sandpipers, 3 Spotted

Redshanks and 3 Greenshanks and single Avocets. Other sightings included a single Great Skua, 3 Arctic Skuas, a Black Tern at Castle Water on 4 dates. However, the best birding was between 9th and 14th! On the 9th a single Purple Heron was seen flying over Castle Water, it was also seen briefly on the 10th when an adult Night Heron was visible roosting on one of the islands there. On the 12th and 13th a single Garganey was at Ternery Pool. Then on the 14th on a Friends Guided Walk to Pett a superb day was had with 11 Little Stints, 2 Ruff, 1 Wood Sandpiper, 1 Grey Wagtail, 2 Swifts, 3 Bearded Tits, 2 Black Terns, a Peregrine, a superb male Kentish Plover and a skulking adult Bluethroat. The last Swift was recorded on 16th and the last Cuckoo of the year was on 17th. The only other event of note was a boat trip into Rye Bay on 24th. This produced an interesting mix of records with seabirds such as Fulmar, Gannet, Kittiwake, Eider 2, Common Scoter 40, Guillemot 2, Razorbill 1, Sandwich Tern 2, Common Tern 2, Mediterranean Gull 1 adult and Little Gull 3, being seen at the same time as some very familiar "non-seabirds" such as Kestrel (2 miles out); 116 Meadow Pipits flying towards the coast some as far as 8 miles out (one of which was so tired it joined us on the boat for a short time!!); 3 Yellow Wagtails, 1 Pied Wagtail, 1 Robin and 1 Chaffinch all 8 miles out and heading towards land! and 7 Redwings and 1 Song Thrush 2 miles out.

#### OCTOBER 1993

Raptors were varied with single Osprey (2nd), Marsh Harrier (12th & 14th), Hen Harrier (14th), Hobby (2nd) and regular Merlin, Sparrowhawk and Kestrel. Waders were generally scarce, but of interest were Greenshank (3rd/8th/29th), a male Kentish Plover (9th), Avocet (8th/9th), Common Sandpiper (16th) and Curlew Sandpiper (9th/10th), Black tailed Godwit (16th), Green Sandpiper (29th/30th). However, the return of the regular wintering Jack Snipe at the Wader Pool was noted on 4th, with 4 and then later 8 daily (most easily seen at dusk, but you may have to be very patient - best picked out from Common Snipe by the small size and bobbing action of the Jack Snipe).

Last dates (so far!) of some 'summering birds' were; Turtle Dove (8th), Yellow Wagtail (14th), Whinchat (8th), Ring Ouzel (15th), Sedge Warbler (3rd), Reed

Warbler (2nd), Whitethroat (3rd), Garden Warbler (2nd), Willow Warbler (4th), Wheatear (29th).

Wintering birds slowly arrived with small numbers of Wigeon at Ternery Pool throughout the month, then a flock of 30 on 31st, the first Goldeneye arrived back at Ternery Pool on 15th. Small numbers of Brent Geese were seen flying offshore on several occasions with the largest being a flock of 25 on 16th. The first Short-eared Owls were noted on the 30th.

Unusual species noted were Great Skua (1st), Lapland Bunting (7th), Tawny Owl (8th), Red-rumped Swallow 16th, 2 Black Redstarts (20th) and Bearded Tits (15th & 17th).



#### NOVEMBER 1993

A quiet start to the month with very few birds around. The last remains of summer disappeared with the last Swallow on 7th. Winter ducks slowly increased with up to 23 Gadwall, 150 Teal, 140 Mallards, 17 Shoveler and 2 Goldeneye present on Ternery Pool, elsewhere Ruddy Ducks reappeared at Castle Water (after a couple of months absence since their first breeding attempts on the Reserve), a single Scaup arrived at Ternery Pool on 21st but it soon moved to the Long Pit where numbers increased to 13 by the end of the month, a small group of up to 6 Eiders off the coast and at least 100 Common Scoter in the bay. Jack Snipe numbers fell sharply to just 1 by mid month, and other typical winter visitors such as Merlin, Short eared Owl and Hen Harrier have been very scarce.

The only other birds of note were a Bittern at Castle Water on 11th, single Black Redstarts on 9th, 11th and 14th, Goosanders on 23rd and 27th, Goshawk on 22nd, single Avocet on 22nd - 26th, 2 Long eared Owls roosted on an island at the Narrow Pits on 27th, a single female Snow Bunting on the Beach Reserve on 25th - 26th and single Grey Wagtails at Castle Water on 20th and 28th.

## TUESDAY WORKPARTIES

There will again be regular workparties on the first and third Tuesdays of every month, throughout the year. The work will be varied, weeding islands at Ternery Pool, building islands at Castle Water, cutting bramble, coppicing willow, fencing, planting trees and bushes. It is not possible to predict what or

where the tasks will be, so please meet at our Information Centre at 10am. Bring wellingtons, work gloves and any useful tools (bow saws, secateurs, garden forks, spades) and your lunch if you want to stay all day. If there are no tasks to be done there will be the option of a guided walk.

### WHAT ARE THESE WORK PARTIES ?

Barry has asked me to give you an insight into the activities of the work parties on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays in the month. Goodness knows why, when I can rarely be there, but then perhaps that is a bit of his cunning logic to make me feel guilty.

I think it is a pity they are called work parties - conjuring up visions of pick axes in quantity - for it need not be an occasion for hard physical work, but more an opportunity to lend a hand. Popular jobs include; clearing rubbish, weeding or building islands, cutting brambles or willows, simple repair jobs to fences or hides, planting trees or scrub at Castle Water and so on.....

It is also a chance to see parts of the Reserve we don't normally go to and see the flora and fauna at close quarters.

by Steve Denny.

Those of you who have come, know it's an excellent, and probably the only, way of gaining an insight into the workings of the Reserve and its geography. It is also a chance of doing something practical and, therefore, satisfying, to assist the Wardens and the wildlife of the area.

You will meet other Friends of varying ages; do not be misled into thinking that most of the helpers are young. I must be one of the younger helpers and those who know me realise that I'm no longer a "spring chicken". There's no reason why you couldn't come for just a morning only - we meet at 10am at the Information Centre in the Rye Harbour car park.

SO WHY NOT GIVE IT A TRY ????

### PROGRESS AT CASTLE WATER

During the last few months we have made further improvements to Castle Water; created a new island, enlarged a small island, cut brambles to preserve an area of orchid rich grassland, coppiced willows to promote the growth of reeds, reprofiled parts of the pit to encourage wetland wildlife and started excavating an old ditch. See guided walk on 16th October.

A REQUEST FOR TREES AND SHRUBS - part of the work at Castle Water is trying to screen some of the buildings along Harbour Road. If you have any spare plants listed below perhaps you could bring them to a work party or contact Barry for arrangements. We are only planting species that are already found here; Ash, Oak, White Willow, Alder, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Elder, Gorse, Buddleia.

NEW FOOTPATH - we have just sorted out a path to allow a circular walk that

takes in Castle Water, the Wood and the Beach Reserve. Starting at the Rye Harbour car park walk back towards Rye along the road, passing the Church and Spun Concrete. On the left, just after you pass a ditch that passes under the road, go over a fence with a temporary concrete block stile, then over a similar stile in the next fence. Walk diagonally over this rough field to the corner of the embankment, then walk along the base of the embankment towards a clump of Gorse bushes. Keep the Gorse on your left and walk straight across the new embankment. At the end there is a new green fence, keep this on your left and walk around the field. After going over the wooden stile you can walk towards the Castle, then onto the Wood, then back to the Beach Reserve. If your not too sure of this route write to Barry for a 20p Introductory Leaflet and ask him to indicate the new path on the map.



## BREAKFAST AT BROADWATER

by Peter Philpot.

Some of you have probably heard me boast a fantastic house list of 155 species, which includes exotics like Golden Oriole, Bee-eater and Little Egret, but does not include common species like Little Grebe, Gadwall, Coal and Marsh Tits.

However, just recently through a series of unfortunate circumstances, including an operation to remove one of the front legs of our dog Gypsy and myself having a torn calf muscle, our walking has been severely restricted. As a result my birdwatching between August 23rd and September 23rd has been confined to the house and some very short walks to the edge of the Long Pit and back. During this month I have found breakfast to be the most productive period for birds. The Autumn is about the only time of year that we have warblers in our back patch and this year Lesser Whitethroats have predominated, on 23rd August I saw at least 6 in the Tamarisk (between the poached egg and toast) and before I had finished my tea a flight of 12 Yellow Wagtails went by. On the 27th (banana and cereal) I counted 21 Magpies in one hawthorn bush. On the 30th a female Black Redstart perched on the telephone wires just 10 yards from our window. Also on the 30th there was tremendous movement of Swallows and Sand Martins, with about 2000 Starlings on the telephone wires, the sky was full of birds when suddenly everything disappeared and I saw 2 Hobbies flying high to the East and then another

appeared from the West, three in 2 minutes and it wasn't even breakfast, but tea time. The next day, kipper with Spotted Flycatcher, 2 Wheatears and a large movement of Sand Martins. On September 1st a walk to the Long Pit and down by the stile produced Black Redstart and 3 Spotted Flycatchers. September 2nd, at breakfast, a Sparrowhawk belted through the garden and I saw a Kingfisher at the Long Pit. Between the 3rd and the 8th we saw 2 Black Redstarts, a young Bullfinch, and Lesser Whitethroats every day. On the 8th another Hobby flew past as we were washing up. On the 12th I could hardly believe my eyes when a Kingfisher perched briefly some 10 feet from our window, yes we were having breakfast!! On the 15th September, after breakfast, I saw a Marsh Harrier from the bathroom window, thank goodness we haven't got frosted glass windows. From then to the 19th Blackcaps started to come through with several Chiffchaffs and Whitethroats as well as another young Bullfinch, and of course the whole time Swallows and Martins were moving through. Another Hobby on the 19th, again at breakfast, later in the day (at lunch time I think) a Swift and then at tea time, yet another Hobby.

I don't know what it is about "Breakfast at Broadwater" but the birds seem to like it, and this morning September 23rd a male Peregrine was circling on stiff wings while I was having bacon and mushrooms.

I DO LIKE MY BREAKFAST !!!!!



## PLANT AND PRODUCE SALE 93

by Liz Blackwell

This was held as usual on Bank Holiday Monday, 30th August. The event was well supported throughout the morning with a steady flow of customers. All the stalls were well supplied with goods and trading was brisk.

A profit of £406.88 was made, an increase

on recent years and a good sum to raise in such a short space of time.

Thanks are due to those who donated goods for sale, those who attended and supported by buying and to those who helped on the day and spent time in preparation beforehand.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 1994

- Sunday, 13th February. The Castle Water Circular Walk (leaflets available @ 20p) with a possible chance to go inside Camber Castle. Meet at 9am at the Brede Lock car park TQ920198, returning about mid-day.
- Saturday, 19th March. Beach Clean and a chance to see your first Wheatear and Sandwich Tern of the Year. Meet 10am at Information Centre with work gloves. Work for as long as you like, but until at least 12.30 for hot soup!
- Saturday, 16th April. A short circular walk around the Beach Reserve to look at the wildlife. Meet at Information Centre, 2-5pm.
- Saturday, 23rd April. A members evening with a guest wildlife speaker and Nature Reserve update. At Winchelsea Beach Village Hall, 7.30pm.
- Sunday, 1st May. A circular walk starting at the Information Centre at 5am to watch the Whimbrel leave their roost at Ternery Pool, then migrants in the Wood and then to Castle Water, hopefully finding 70+ species of bird and much other wildlife before returning about noon.
- Saturday, 11th June. The Grand Cycling Tour of The Nature Reserve, meet at Information Centre at 10am, returning about 2pm. Please bring your own bicycle, lunch and energy.
- Saturday, 16th July. Wildlife beneath the sand. A chance to build sandcastles and find what lives below the sand. Please bring a small bucket and spade, if you can! Meet at River Mouth at 10am (until 12 noon).
- Saturday, 6th August. What can we catch at Castle Water? A morning's study of the animals, hopefully getting a close look at bugs, mammals and birds. Limited numbers, so please book with Barry; 0797 223862.
- Tuesday, 13th September. Waders and other migrants at Pett and Rye Harbour. Meet at 9am at Pett Pools (TQ9014) or at 10am at Dog's Hill Road toilet block (TQ917160) for a circular walk around the Reserve, returning about 1pm.
- A Saturday in September. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING at Community Centre, Rye. More details in next Newsletter.
- Sunday, 16th October. Wildlife Management of Castle Water. A three hour circular walk to look at principles and progress! Please book with Barry; 0797 223862.
- Saturday, 19th November. The Castle Water Circular Walk (leaflets available @ 20p) with a possible chance to go inside Camber Castle. Meet at 9am at the Brede Lock car park TQ920198, returning about mid-day.
- Sunday, 18th December. Winter Wildlife at Rye Harbour. Are there any Swans, Partridge, Geese and Turtle Doves for Christmas? Meet at Information Centre at 10am, returning about 1pm.

## TIDES AT RYE HARBOUR

The state of the tide can influence what birds you see on the Beach Reserve. A high tide will make it easier to see and count waders, sea duck, Rock Pipits on saltmarsh in Winter and Dolphins offshore in July. Below is a summary of the times and heights of tides on Saturdays through the year.

Remember; the tide gets about 1 hour later each day, there are two high tides a day and the weather will influence the height of the tide.

### January

1st(1257-3.5m.), 8th(0725-2.6m.), 15th(1316-3.3m.), 22nd(0613-1.9m.), 29th(1204-3.7m.)

### February

5th(1829-2.1m.), 12th(1224-3.5m.), 19th(1638-1.8m.), 26th(1103-3.7m.).

### March

5th(1641-2.2m.), 12th(1128-3.5m.), 19th(1437-2.5m.), 26th(1059-3.5m.).

### April

2nd(1415-3.2m.), 9th(1127-3.1m.), 16th(1439-3.1m.), 23rd(0945-3.1m.), 30th(1508-3.5m.).

### May

7th(1014-2.7m.), 14th(1359-3.2m.), 21st(0814-2.6m.), 28th(1410-3.8m.).

### June

4th(0826-2.2m.), 11th(1316-3.3m.), 18th(1849-2.7m.), 25th(1317-3.8m.).

### July

2nd(1836-2.2m.), 9th(1219-3.3m.), 16th(1711-3.0m.), 23rd(1223-3.7m.), 30th(1652-2.6m.).

### August

7th(1153-3.5m.), 13th(1552-3.5m.), 20th(1127-3.5m.), 27th(1522-3.1m.).

### September

3rd(1001-2.9m.), 10th(1445-3.9m.), 17th(1022-3.1m.), 24th(1419-3.3m.).

### October

1st(0834-2.4m.), 8th(1344-4.2m.), 15th(0857-2.6m.), 22nd(1229-3.5m.), 29th(0544-2.1m.).

### November

5th(1142-4.3m.), 12th(0551-2.5m.), 19th(1134-3.5m.), 26th(1555-2.4m.).

### December

3rd(1041-4.1m.), 10th(1643-2.4m.), 17th(1034-3.1m.), 24th(1429-3.0m.), 31st(0943-3.5m.).

## AN UNUSUAL SIGHTING

By Pete Rowberry.

On the 5th of September I was watching a group of tern feeding offshore with a fellow bird watcher that I met on the Reserve that day, when I saw a large sea mammal about 50m to 100m offshore near to the feeding birds. It was clearly too large to be a dolphin or porpoise. I estimate it was between 12m and 17m long. It was in uniform dark colour, dark grey or black. There were no signs of any dark markings. The animal regularly broke the surface, at about 90 second intervals or so. It progressed along the shore, travelling west towards Dungeness. When appearing out of the water, it never totally broke the surface, leaving its belly in the water, diving down leaving just its tail exposed.

I am not an expert in Cetaceans, but after discussing the sighting with others I judged that it was a Minke whale. It was a once in a lifetime experience; for once the bird life on Rye Harbour took second place.

