



The following is a summary by Officers and Members with Specific responsibilities, setting out the Society's achievements during 2025 under the heading of the relevant Committee where applicable.

The objectives of the Society and the Strategies for achieving them can be seen in the Trustees' report and on our website. <https://www.sos.org.uk/about-the-sos>

Sussex Ornithological Society

Officers and Members Report for year ended 31 December 2025

Council

The Society is managed and run by a member elected Council who are also Trustees of the Society.

The current members of Council as at 31 December 2025 are as follows:- **Clare Buckle** (Chair), **Alan Swetman** (Secretary), **Ted Merrikin** (Treasurer), **Jonno Cook** (Chair of Membership & Publicity Committee), **Susan Kerry Bedell** (Council Member), **Tony Benton** (Council Member), **Steve Gilbert** (Council Member), **Adam Huttly** (Council Member), **Katie Nethercoat** (Council Member), **Jack Thompson** (Council Member), **Pat Wilder** (Council Member).

The Chair of Scientific Committee is also a Council Member but this position is vacant currently with **Mark Mallalieu** filling this role on a temporary basis.

Council is supported and advised by **Chris Corrigan** (President).

Committees

The work of Council is hugely supported by the work of the various committees and sub-committees.

Membership of these as at 31 December 2025 was as follows:-

Scientific Committee Mark Mallalieu (Acting Chair), Joanne Chattaway (Secretary), James Aldridge, Dave Boddington, Dr Helen Crabtree, Martin Flores, Alison Giacomelli, Dr John Newnham, Dr Ken Smith, David Thorns.

Bird Report *Situation Vacant* (Editor), Joanne Chattaway, Nigel Davis-Patrick, Graham Hughes (Asst. Editor), Paul James, Simon Linington, Owen Mitchell, Dr John Newnham, Laurence Pitcher, Dr Ken Smith, David Thorns.

Records Committee David Thorns (Recorder), Brian Cox, Andrew House, Bart Ives, Paul James, Jamie Partridge, Matt Phelps, Laurence Pitcher.

Membership & Publicity Committee Jonno Cook (Chair), Sue Bziot, Chris Brown, Jack Curry, Chris Davis, Thalia Griffiths, Kerry Jackson, David Porter, Pat Wilder, Dr Mark DM Wright.

Outing/Programme Committee Dr Mark DM Wright (Outings Organiser), Bernie Forbes, Audrey Wende.

To all members of the Society's Council, Committees & other volunteers and to those who have retired during 2025, our very sincere thanks for all your hard work.

Chair's Report

I am proud to present the annual report for the Society for 2025, reflecting the incredible amount of unpaid work our officers and volunteers have carried out during the year resulting in some significant outcomes for the Society.

In support of our objectives to record and study birds in Sussex, assist in the conservation of wild birds, and to engage and inspire people to appreciate birds and their habitats, we have had a number of achievements in 2025:

The year began with the annual bird race, with 16 teams raising over £1800 for the Society, closely followed by a successful conference with five excellent talks. During the year officers have worked extremely hard on plans for a volunteer thank you event, and new format combined conference & AGM, which will take place in January and April 2026 respectively.

At the AGM in April 2025, we outlined our plans for development of a new Society website. A small team have worked throughout 2025 with our selected provider to develop the new site, as well as commissioning updated branding for the Society. We are excited about these developments and look forward to unveiling the refreshed site and designs in 2026.

Once again, we published the consistently excellent Sussex Bird Report, as well as our quarterly newsletter for members. As well as 40 outings for our members to enjoy, we provided talks to local communities to inspire and support their interest in birds.

Through the generosity of our members, the public, and Chichester Harbour Friends, we supported the restoration of the Ferry Pool at Sidlesham through the Big Give campaign. We funded marker buoys on the River Adur at Shoreham to raise awareness of wildlife-only areas on the RSPB reserve, and funded trail cameras at Rye Harbour to increase monitoring of predators during the forthcoming breeding season.

Society grants have supported a number of local communities who wish to provide nest boxes for Swifts and Hirundines, and we continue to provide funding for nest boxes to Sussex Barn Owl Group as well as supporting site maintenance at Charleston Reedbed.

Our busy conservation team continue to monitor planning applications for impacts on birds and habitats, lodging objections where it is believed appropriate to do so, based on evidence available from our extensive bird records.

These achievements are outlined in more detail in the report below.

Behind the scenes Council met five times to oversee the work of the Society, ensuring that our governance and finances are sound. Major items for discussion have included the ongoing work of ensuring that all aspects of risk are effectively managed for the Society. We introduced a new Donations policy, outlining how we award grants, and a new Privacy policy was published.

Supporting all of these achievements are teams of volunteers dedicating hours of work fitted around other commitments and, in some cases, around full-time jobs too. I am extremely grateful to our committed Council and Committee members and all our volunteers for their hard work and dedication, and to Society members for their invaluable support of the Society.

Clare Buckle – Chair of Council

Treasurer

Sussex Ornithological Society once again had a financially positive year in 2025. Income from members' subscriptions, legacies, donations, and gift aid was £59,745, for which the Society is extremely grateful to members. All monies given will be used to support conservation projects. We are particularly grateful for the legacies left to the Society by individuals remembering us in their wills.

During the year, the Society donated a total of £19,456 to conservation projects, also a further £20,000 promised to the RSPB in the accounts of 2022 was paid in support of the Ferry Pool reconstruction at Pagham Harbour. See more on this exciting development later in this report. A total of £37,500 has been donated to this project by your Society. Council is keen to support more projects both large and small again this year supporting our wonderful Avifauna in the county.

2025 saw many more of you joining or renewing your membership of the Society via our website, this is of great importance to us as it regularises our database information that we hold for members. I would like to encourage all members who pay yearly by standing order to renew through our web site selecting DIRECT DEBIT or recurring credit card payments. This will enable more members to be recognised on our database via Member Press. You possibly do not know that a huge amount of work is involved in inputting data manually for those who pay through the bank. Please may I ask for your help in reducing this work by renewing your membership via our website. For those of you that are uncomfortable with the online mechanism we would be happy for you to send a cheque to Ted Merrikin, Blessings, Barns Farm Lane, Storrington, West Sussex RH20 4AH.

Our accountant Maurice Frost FCA has completed the examination of the Society's accounts for 2025, and I have included the Statement of Financial Activities and Balance sheet in a simplified format. Greater details of the Trustees' Report and financial statement can be found on our website in addition to that of the Charity Commissions.

Since 1972 the Society has donated over £494,000 to deserving projects, so a huge thank you for all your support over the decades. I would urge you to register with us for Gift Aid if you are a taxpayer as it makes a massive difference to our income, being able to claim back an extra 25% on top of your membership and donations that you give to the Society. Gift Aid is worth £1.3 billion to the Charity Sector, but every year more than £500 million goes unclaimed. To date we have been able to claim a substantial amount back from HMRC, more than £98,000. Thank you very much on behalf of the Society.

The annual Bird Race remains a very popular event at the beginning of each year, although the number of entrants was reduced during the pandemic it has now regained momentum. Since 2002 the sum raised by participating teams has risen to more than £39,750 including gift aid.

Ted Merrikin – Treasurer

Sussex Ornithological Society

Statement of financial activities
for the year ended 31 December 2025

		Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Designated funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total funds 2025 £	Total funds 2024 £
Note						
Income from:						
Donations, legacies and Gift Aid	3	21,005	-	-	21,005	7,851
Charitable activities	4	3,533	-	-	3,533	3,313
Other trading activities	5	2,830	-	-	2,830	2,864
Investments	6	6,261	-	-	6,261	5,151
Membership subscriptions	7	21,841	4,275	-	26,116	22,804
Total income		<u>55,470</u>	<u>4,275</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>59,745</u>	<u>41,983</u>
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds	11	256	-	-	256	499
Grant funding	12	15,971	3,485	-	19,456	3,201
Charitable activities	13	29,001	-	-	29,001	25,466
Depreciation on Society's equipment	19	748	-	-	748	310
Total expenditure		<u>45,976</u>	<u>3,485</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>49,461</u>	<u>29,476</u>
Net movement of funds		<u>9,494</u>	<u>790</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10,284</u>	<u>12,507</u>
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward		57,085	46,854	-	103,939	91,432
Net movement of funds		9,494	790	-	10,284	12,507
Total funds carried forward		<u>66,579</u>	<u>47,644</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>114,223</u>	<u>103,939</u>

Balance Sheet

As at 31 December 2025

		2025 £	As Restated 2024 £
Note			
Fixed Assets			
Equipment owned by the Society	19	2,013	1,290
Current assets			
Debtors	20	123	-
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>113,320</u>	<u>130,068</u>
		<u>113,444</u>	<u>130,068</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	21	<u>(1,234)</u>	<u>(27,419)</u>
Net current assets		<u>112,210</u>	<u>102,649</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>114,223</u>	<u>103,939</u>

Charity funds

Restricted funds	22	-	-
Designated funds	22	46,213	46,854
Unrestricted funds	22	68,010	57,085
Total funds		<u>114,223</u>	<u>103,939</u>

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the
Trustees on 12/03/2026 and signed on their behalf by:

Clare Buckle

Clare Buckle
Chair of Council

Scientific Committee

There were five Scientific Committee meetings in 2025, all held via Zoom video conferencing. Martin Banks was welcomed on to the Committee as Conservation Officer in June but stepped down from the Committee in November for personal reasons; the Conservation Team remains in place. Chas Holt resigned as Chair in August due to family commitments and Mark Mallalieu agreed to be acting Chair. Two new members, James Aldridge and Martin Flores, joined as joint Surveys Officers in October replacing Pete Hughes who remains on the surveys team in a support role. Members of the Scientific Committee have made very valuable contributions to the Society's work including on records, the database, surveys, conservation, the Sussex Bird Report and archiving, which are reported below.

Joanne Chataway – Secretary to Scientific Committee

The Sussex Bird Report

An unwelcome surprise this year, my last as editor, was that our printers went out of business in the middle of the report drafting process. Happily, we were able to switch almost overnight to The Lavenham Press, who did a great job. The 2024 Sussex Bird Report was delivered to members promptly in the last week of October. As well as the systematic list with accounts of all species recorded during the year, there were excellent papers on the 2024 Corn Bunting Survey; Marsh Tits in Warnham Parish; and habitat selection by Nightjars in Ashdown Forest.

The report also included the Introduction to the Classified Records, the Review of the Year, BTO Breeding Bird Survey results, Sussex Winter Bird Survey results, the Ringing Report, updated First & Last Migrant Dates, the Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird survey results, and a Finder's account for a notable species in 2024, the Pied Wheatear at Seaford Head.

The drafting and production of the report again involved over 50 people: the assistant editor, species account authors, proofreaders, the writers of the various papers and articles and the contributors of many splendid photographs and pieces of artwork. Preparatory work had made comprehensive 2024 data accessible, with guidance for account writers and proofreaders. I am indebted to everyone involved, including my colleagues in the Editorial Team.

Mark Mallalieu - Editor

Conservation

The Conservation team continues to keep up to date with national planning policy and other issues affecting birds in Sussex. At national level, parts of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill currently going through parliamentary process are of considerable concern to conservation bodies. In November, Natural England withdrew the requirement that planned developments across large areas of North Sussex should be "water neutral". This was originally introduced to protect the Arun Valley from damage due to increasing water abstraction, and some worries remain regarding this change of policy.

Under the Environment Act of 2021, Counties have to prepare Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and both East and West Sussex have consulted on their draft LNRS documents in 2025. The Society contributed extensively. Both of these documents are positive, and it is hoped that they

will move forward to adoption in 2026. While these strategies do not confer additional protection on sites included in them, they will prove useful tools in guiding development proposals.

We work with other wildlife and conservation organisations (Sussex Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Woodland Trust and the Council for the Preservation of Rural England) to pursue the best outcome from Local Plan consultations wherever possible as once a site is allocated for housing as part of a Local Plan it becomes much more difficult to oppose applications for development. The preparation of Local Plans within the County has been affected by changes in central government policy, and Arun, Wealden and Horsham District Plan updates are currently paused. The South Downs National Park Authority hope to consult on the final version of their Plan in 2026.

In Wealden, the team have been liaising with a local pressure group which has been effective in generating opposition to harmful proposals for a new village at Owlsbury Farm, west of Uckfield, as well as another group opposing an application for a substantial development within the High Weald National Landscape near Frant. More positively, an application to Mid-Sussex District Council for a new village between Ansty and Cuckfield was refused, while plans for new settlements near Hamsey and Kingsfold have gone quiet, at least for the moment.

We approached Lewes District Council about a proposed development for 70 houses at Barcombe Cross which would affect a large concentration of breeding Nightingales and hope that measures will be taken that protect the habitat and buffer areas. A number of planning applications to Chichester District were concerning, and we have objected to an application for the development of land adjacent to Ebernoe Common Nature Reserve as a shooting estate with substantial infrastructure. Our work is not always about objections - we have supported proposals submitted by the National Trust for the creation of saltmarsh at Chyngton Brooks on the lower Cuckmere by breaching current banks on the west side of the river.

Plans for a very large development on land west of Ifield (Crawley) have been submitted by Homes England, with 3,000 houses in the initial stage, together with a new western relief road from Faygate to Lowfield Heath. We have objected to these proposals, as have our partner organisations, highlighting the effect on a number of Local Wildlife Sites among other issues.

The Rampion 2 wind farm proposals were given the green light by Government in April. This will involve cable-laying across West Sussex from Climping north-eastwards to Cowfold, as well as the huge offshore wind turbines. The effect these will have on birds is largely unknown.

Efforts to achieve a satisfactory outcome for Brent Geese that will be displaced by approval for development close to the west side of Pagham Village and just north of Pagham Harbour have not been effective so far and we are monitoring this situation. Work to try and get improved statutory protection designations for Bewl Water is continuing and encouragingly Natural England have listed it as a candidate site for a Special Protection Area for wintering Black-headed and Common Gulls. The Society's engagement over many years has been vital.

While the team endeavours to keep abreast of what is happening across the County, things do get missed. It is a great help if members, on becoming aware of planning proposals or anything that they think may affect their local bird habitats, e-mail us as soon as possible – conservation@sos.org. The team has been able to intervene on a number of local issues raised by members during 2025.

Susan Kerry Bedell, Anthony Holden, Warren Long & Pat Wilder – Conservation Team

Charlston Reedbed

The beginning of the year saw a continuation of the dry conditions we had experienced earlier in the season and we were able to continue with habitat management on the site. A second small area of reed was cut and various willow areas coppiced. We ran a volunteer day in March and finished clearing the bramble overgrowth by the pond.

The following spring showed the fruits of our labour with the cut areas of reed showing early signs of growth and reed becoming more abundant on the areas where we had cut bramble with the volunteers. The amount of re-growth produced by the willows is always astonishing.

In summer, attention turned to the ringing hut, a fresh coat of paint and some new storage solutions to neaten things up and keep the mice at bay!

Our most recent Society volunteer day was well attended with 6 volunteers joining 7 Cuckmere Ringing Group members. We were able to clear an area of blackthorn which had slowly been encroaching on other habitats. We had many new volunteers as well as those who had attended before. Their efforts are always very much appreciated.

Natasha Stonestreet

Database

By the end of 2025 the Society's database of records held 8,860,894 records from 3809 sites within Sussex. This large collection of records has been provided by 13,675 observers. During 2025 908,759 records were added to the database, 64% involved observations for 2025, 35% for 2024 sightings and less than 1% for over 50 earlier years. Like previous years, records have been labelled as coming from over 50 sources; those providing most records were the Cornell University eBird (51%), BTO's Birdtrack (37%), BTO's Garden Bird Watch (2%) and BTO's Wetland Bird Survey (2%). The 2025 dataset will not be completed until later in 2026 but more details about the 2024 records were published in the 77th Sussex Bird Report.

In keeping with other years 514,015 records were shared with the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre in the late summer. This dataset comprised mainly 2024 (507,151) records but included a substantial number of records from earlier years. These observations then became readily available for use by local authorities, conservationists and researchers. The Society's multi-user online database CoBRA2 (C2) continued to be used extensively and regularly during the year. The record extraction module was used on 1452 occasions on 269 different days by 26 different users. The Account Writers module, which includes considerable analysis of the records, was accessed less frequently with most use, as expected, during the Sussex Bird Report writing and editing process. This module of the database was interrogated on 480 occasions by 33 users on 106 different dates.

Maintenance of the database requires considerable effort from both the database team (Dr John Newnham, Roger Hulbert, dealing with eBird records, and Jan ten Sythoff working with iRecord records) and the Recorder (David Thorns). During the year 196 batches of records, varying between 200,472 and a single record, were processed and uploaded on 103 different dates. Adding new records to the database involved 101 batches totalling over a million records but many of these needed further edits and 91 batches (68,219 records) dealt with these record amendments. With multiple record sources substantial duplication occurred and four batches

during the year were run to remove 102,734 duplicates. Furthermore, despite the extensive automated record checking programmed into the system there was still much work to be done by the bird report, database and recording teams to contact observers about potential erroneous records.

The database continues to function very well. During the autumn an additional feature was added to the record extraction module to greatly facilitate creating the files for tetrad mapping using records from the database. Once again Chris Brown, the Society's Webmaster, and his colleague Andy Lawrence have continued to be very responsive on the few occasions there is an issue. The Society continues to be extremely grateful to Chris and Andy for the continuing work maintaining CoBRA2 and to Roger and Jan for their valuable help during 2025.

Dr John Newnham – Database Manager

Records

The year ran in a rather similar vein to 2024 with no new species for the county discovered. Nevertheless, there were plenty of interesting sightings!

At the beginning of the year, we learned with regret that Gareth James was to step down from the Rarities Committee - he was replaced by Bart Ives.

There were significantly more records submitted to the Recorder this year: a total of 142 were received. Six of these concerned nationally rare species requiring validation by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC). The remaining 136 were sent out in batches throughout the year to members of the SOS Rarities Committee (SOSRC) - it is interesting that only three of these were classed as "Not Proven", indicative of good quality submissions and/or admirable prudence from observers.

By the end of the year the six BBRC records were still awaiting formal acceptance, and ten were still under review by SOSRC.

With more and more observers using digital photography and social media it was possible for the Recorder to use them to "fastrack" certain records of clearly identifiable, photographed species (Red-backed Shrike, Glossy Ibis and Hoopoe being notable examples). This avoided the usual (more lengthy) assessments at SOSRC and made the overall verification process more timely and efficient.

On June 4th a report of the nationally scarce migrants occurring in Sussex in 2024 was prepared and sent to Steve White for the annual report in British Birds. In late November, a report of nationally rare breeding birds in Sussex in 2024 was prepared and sent to Dr Mark Eaton, secretary of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, for his annual report to be published in the same journal.

The Recorder spent significant time during the year reviewing "flagged" records in the three major databases - iRecord, Birdtrack and eBird.

As usual the Recorder liaised closely throughout the year with JA Newnham (Database Manager) in the streamlining of the database, removing all "unproven" records and validating those that had been accepted by SOSRC.

David Thorns – Recorder

Surveys

The following long-term annual surveys continued to be carried out in 2025 (survey coordinator's name in brackets):

- The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), (Dr Helen Crabtree). For the BBS in Sussex, 191 1km squares (back to 191 squares, after one year at 201) were surveyed this year by 147 volunteers.

- Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), (Dr Helen Crabtree and Dave Boddington): Most of the main sites in Sussex were covered in 2024/2025.

- Co-ordinated sea watching records for 2025 were summarised in the Sussex Bird Report by Dr John Newnham. An opportunity has been identified for someone to pull together Splash Point Sea watching records locally for submission from 2026. This would assist with the consolidation of accurate counts for this premier sea watching site.

- The 2025 Heronries Census (Dr Helen Crabtree). Counts were completed at 43 sites by 36 observers in 2025.

- The Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey in West Sussex (Alan Perry) covered 12 heathland sites in 2025. The five priority species surveyed were Nightjar, Woodlark, Tree Pipit, Stonechat and Dartford Warbler. 2025 was the 28th year of the survey for 10 of the sites, whilst two were added at later dates.

- Three Waterways Breeding Bird Surveys (WBBS) (Dr Helen Crabtree) were carried out.

- In winter 2024/25 the Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) (Christine George) was completed for its fourteenth year. 100 individual volunteers were involved with 154 1km squares receiving at least one visit, and 134 squares getting two visits.

During the winters of 2023/24 and 2024/25 there was also a BTO winter gull survey (WinGS), coordinated by WeBS local organisers. Five inland sites were covered by five observers, and 18 coastal sites were covered by 20 observers.

In late 2024, the BTO announced that it intends to carry out a new national Bird Atlas project covering 2027-2031. Sussex Ornithological Society plans to complete a county bird atlas for this survey period over four years from winter 2027/28 to summer 2031. The partially complete 2025 Tree Pipit survey remains on the agenda for future surveys.

James Aldridge & Martin Flores – Surveys Officers

Sussex Barn Owl Study Group

Painting a picture of 2 Sussex Owl species in 2025 and beginning with Tawny Owl monitoring in April we found zero chicks in 24 East Sussex boxes visited. Therefore, we had concerns regarding the Tawny Owl's lack of breeding success, and would the cause affect our Barn Owls. It transpired their 2025 breeding season was also severely impacted with numbers exceedingly lower than our usual records. In fact, this year's number of Barn Owls ringed was 175 less than last year's total! Despite this, the group carried out an impressive programme of monitoring more than 200 boxes in East and West Sussex, leading to the following findings:

- 37 chicks were ringed, from broods ranging between one and four chicks.
- One highlight was that 28 new adults were discovered in boxes and fitted with both metal and colour rings.
- Five previously ringed adults were re-trapped.
- Three controls (birds ringed by other groups or individuals) showed movements between 5 km and 40 km – valuable data for understanding dispersal.

Altogether, 65 barn owls were ringed by the group this season. Colour ring colour combination was white letters on black this year, 2024 colours being white on red. 7 sightings were reported post ringing, which identified chick 2 dispersal movements of 4km (Lower and Adur Ouse corridors), 3 movements of 11km, 14 and 17km and 1 of 44km.

To better understand the cause of the drop in 2025 Barn Owl numbers, pellets have been sent for analysis to assess prey availability, particularly field voles. Personal 'tabletop' analysis of 6 pellets revealed just 1 field vole skull. Group discussion resulted in confirmation that 2024 was a poor mast year with a lack of trees producing fruit and nuts potentially resulting in a poor vole year.

Fortunately, 2026 is shaping up to be the reverse of that.

Terry Hallahan – Sussex Barn Owl Group

Swifts

The 2025 breeding season appears to have been a good one for Swifts, without extreme heat and with enough rainfall at the right time of the season to benefit invertebrate numbers, and hence Swift food supplies!

Many local Swift groups in the county recorded better take-up of external boxes than in previous years, which is encouraging.

It is hoped that birds that fledge from Swift boxes will have this type of nest (i.e. boxes) imprinted, so that they are more likely to use purpose-built boxes when they return to breed in their fourth year. In this way, the take-up of boxes should increase over the coming years, helping to mitigate the loss of more traditional nest sites in the eaves of buildings. Ongoing surveying and monitoring will be the best way to confirm if the above theory proves to be correct or not.

Many of the local groups have developed and grown in both size and confidence, with some producing excellent annual reports analysing data collected over several years. Brighton and Lewes currently have the largest colonies, unsurprisingly given their geographic size, but other important colonies exist in smaller towns, and these are being given vital help through local groups, with box installation, surveying and monitoring.

Lewes Swift Supporters group recorded 107 active nest sites, representing a significant increase from the 84 in 2024, although this is caveated with factors such as increased observer effort. The 12 pairs that nested in boxes represent 11% of these 107 sites, which is encouraging.

Other smaller projects recorded good uptake in boxes too. In Southwick, of 9 boxes 6 had Swifts in, with the other three hosting House Sparrows (also a red listed species); whilst in

Hurstpierpoint, 13 of 20 boxes were occupied by Swifts. This represents a 66% and 65% respectively, take up of boxes.

One disappointment during the year, has been the failure of the British government to pass legislation requiring Swift bricks to be implemented as part of the national planning framework.

Dave Boddington – Swift Champion

Swallows & Martins

It has been a cracking summer for our Hirundines, with the continuous warm weather seeming to provide a good supply of insects throughout their stay.

I managed to support Society members Tim Parmenter and Reg Lanaway to count the House Martin colony at Plumpton Agricultural College on the 10th July where a total of 32 active nests were recorded. The college has also been supplied with 18 artificial House Martin nest cups and 4 Swift boxes, funded by the Society.

The Arundel town project, Bring Back Our Birds (B-BOB) supported by the Society, has seen its first successes with two of the artificial House Martin nest cups being occupied this summer for the first time. More boxes were also fitted this year. A few more House Martin nest sites were identified and two pairs nested on the western side of the town for the first time in several years. Swallows also used a porch way near the station for the first time.

The Clymping village project, again funded by the Society, has also seen successes with a House Martin nest cup being occupied and the first fledging of a Swift chick from one of the boxes erected last year! More nest boxes are planned for fitting during 2026.

It has been a busy year working with many organisations such as the National Trust, Arun District Council, Chichester District Council giving advice on helping our Hirundines. I have also been helping and advising Sussex villages including Rogate, Easebourne, Mayfield, West Chiltington and Hurstpierpoint with new projects.

I led two walks in Easebourne, one for residents and another for the local brownies where we watched a pair of Swallows feeding their young in the local bus shelter!

Looking forward to 2026 and the House Martin survey.

Paul Stevens – Hirundine Champion

Membership & Publicity

Chair's Report

The year saw significant changes in the Membership and Publicity Committee (M&P) and the start of delivery of some of the key strategic changes that had been identified as important issues.

On the people front, Val Bentley stepped down from the committee after many years of service to M&P and other areas of the Society. Val will continue to run the annual bird race, help with some of the membership administration and be an eagle eye on pre reading your quarterly newsletter checking the content before it gets distributed. Another stalwart of M&P and other Society activities, Audrey Wende, also stood down as organiser of our mid-week walks

programme. Audrey will continue to be another pair of eagle eyes for our newsletter proof reading. We are indebted to their work over many years.

The year's four newsletters were always a joy to read. They always included some interesting content and occasional humour and helped shorten several long train journeys that I have to do in my day job. Thanks to Thalia Griffiths for quietly having this under control. If you haven't yet converted to receiving these digitally, please consider this. They are easy to read on mobile devices including phones and tablets.

We have welcomed to the committee Kerry Jackson, who has taken over from Audrey as mid-week walk organiser, Jack Curry, who is helping us deliver some of the administration connected to our events programme and Sue Bzikot who will provide software training.

Yet again, a full programme of birding events has been staged to all corners of the county. These have been well attended and we are indebted to our walks leaders for fronting these. We are always on the lookout for new leaders and it was heartening to see some new ones come on board in 2025. Thank you, Mark Wright, Kerry Jackson, Audrey Wende and Jack Curry, for working so hard on these.

For several years, we were between two systems for recording our membership information, partially on Excel and partially in MemberPress. This has now been merged into a single online entity in MemberPress and will make its administration and reporting much simpler. This was a technically intricate operation and at the time of writing we are sorting minor issues. This is truly a case of short term pain for long term gain.

Inflationary pressures on the Society led us to decide at the AGM in 2025 to increase subs rates for the first time in many years. Work to implement this has started and it is hoped that members will continue to support us and change their Standing Orders to other payment methods. Our online charging enables plastic or Direct Debit payments, which will recur 12 months after the initial transaction. By changing from Standing Order to the other payment methods, the transaction will automatically be registered on our Memberpress without the need for our busy volunteers to have to manually update membership records. Membership will last a rolling 12 months rather than from January 1 to December 31 each year. Considerable work from Chris Davis, Chris Brown, Ted Merrikin, Val Bentley and myself has facilitated this.

We have had good press coverage over the year which will be detailed in Pat Wilder's report and there have been significant improvements in our social media coverage thanks to Adam Huttly's work.

The Society will soon get a new website, a fresh look and a more modern feel. A small team including Adam Huttly, Clare Buckle, Katie Nethercoat, Chris Brown and myself have fed into this. By the time this is published, hopefully it's up and running. We should take a moment to thank Chris Brown for all his work in maintaining the old site that stood us well for many years. But Chris was the first to admit that it was time for change. The new site will have some new members only content which will be easy to access.

Some of the M&P team visited Hampshire Ornithological Society's Members' Day which is the largest face to face gathering for a bird related organisation in the country, even top trumping the national ones. They combine their conference and AGM into a single event and have a significant exhibition aligned with it. The average age profile of attendees was much younger than our conference, as was a higher proportion of women there than our event. Whilst we have always

been proud of our conference, 2025's being no exception, this inspired us to make changes for the 2026. It will be open to all with free entry to Society members. This will be at The University of Brighton and we hope that this location will inspire students studying ecology from Falmer's two universities (Sussex and Brighton) to attend, that they will be inspired by the programme and in certain instances be part of the presenting team. Attendees will not have to be Society members to attend (unlike previous conferences) and we will be promoting the event at targeted groups in the Brighton and Lewes area. David Porter and Jack Curry are working hard on delivering this.

There has been no President's Evening in 2024 and 2025 and we decided to relaunch this as a Volunteer Thank You event for 2026 in January.

Finally, I would like to thank our members for their support of the Sidlesham Ferry Field and Pool works via The Big Give's Green Match Fund. Most of the ground works are now complete and it is already evident that more birds are using the site than in recent years. The pools' islands will be topped with materials suitable for nesting in the coming months and an anti-predator fence will be installed after the breeding season to improve the productivity of nests. This was a new style of fundraising for us and it helped leverage in funding support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and The Big Give Foundation. I would also like to thank Chichester Harbour Friends for their generous donation to the Society to help finance these works.

Jonno Cook – Chair M&P

New Year Bird Race

The weather was not kind in 2025, especially to those who were trying to fit the Race around work commitments. New Year's Day itself brought heavy rain and strong winds, but still 16 teams took part, with 47 members involved. Between them they clocked up 147 species, one more than in 2024, 20 seen by all teams and 15 by just one. There were five new teams The Rookies, The OL25ers, SEO U Later, Pam's Passerines and The String Quartet, plus very long-standing competitors The Dynamic Duo, The Ryenecks, The Martlets, The LBJs, The Treasurers' Team and The Fab Four who all loyally took to the field again. Winners were the North Wallcreepers with 98 species, second place was again taken by the Dynamic Duo, and in third were The Monday Birders.

Winter thrushes were surprisingly scarce with nine teams failing to see Fieldfare. A sign of the times was that only a single team located Yellowhammer compared with five last year and as many as ten (out of 17) in 2017. However, only four out of 11 teams in 2013 saw a Chiffchaff, this year it was 12 from 16.

Donations and sponsorship raised £1,858.25 (including Gift Aid). Over the past 10 years the Race has generated over £23,000 towards SOS conservation projects. Huge thanks to all who have participated and contributed to the success of the Race.

Val Bentley – Bird Race Organiser

Press & Publicity

The Society has gained publicity in respect of a wide range of subjects throughout the year. Our financial contribution to the major project at Ferry Pools, Sidlesham, was covered in online media as well as the Chichester Observer. The influx of Hoopoes in April made an interesting story, referring to the many sightings across the county by Society members.

Our support for House Martin and Swift colonies as part of the Nature Friendly Campus initiative at Plumpton College was publicised in social media and online local press in July. In October, the Conservation Team supported the planning application for the restoration of saltmarsh at Chyngton Brooks (Lower Cuckmere) and gained associated publicity in online media, including the Argus.

The above stories also appeared on our website. Following completion of the new website, there will be further opportunities for publicity via social media platforms which will reach a wider audience.

Pat Wilder – Press & Publicity Officer

Young Birders Scheme

In 2024, the Society launched the Young Birders Scheme (YBS) aimed at providing grants of up to £500 to young people aged between 16 and 25 in full time education who live and study in Sussex. The grants can be used for any bird related expenditure such as equipment or cost of training courses. A budget of £5,000 pa has been allocated for the scheme.

At its launch there was a lot of initial interest in the scheme with 7 grants made in the first year (from a total of 9 applications). Opticron have supported the scheme with the provision of free binoculars and discounts on other equipment.

It is fair to say that since the initial launch interest has tailed off and we think that this is largely down to a need to advertise more widely and resource issues within Council.

The plan now is to re-launch the scheme and we hope to assist more young people over the coming year. If any of our membership knows of any young people with an interest in birding who may benefit from the scheme then please do get in touch (jackthompson.work@gmail.com) and/or direct them to the application form on our website.

Jack Thompson – YBS Co-ordinator

Social Media

As in previous years, the Society has continued to have a presence on various Social Media sites including X (Twitter), Bluesky, Facebook & Instagram. Whilst overall impact of these sites has levelled (and in some cases fallen) over recent years a Barn Owl story on X did produce our highest ever tweet with 11,000 views, 432 likes and 28 comments.

We do feel that the new branding and website will improve the look of our Social Media offering going forward and will be a good source of new material but there is an opportunity here for any members (particularly younger and/or those active on social media) to get involved and help run our Social Media. A key part of our offering going forward is to make the Society more attractive

to younger members and so we would be very pleased to hear from anyone who might be able to help here.

Adam Huttly – Social Media Co-ordinator

Conference

Almost 200 members from all over Sussex gathered for the 46th Annual Conference on 25th January. For the third year in succession the event took place at Oathall Community College, Haywards Heath. Once again Conference MC was Adrian Thomas, and our President Chris Corrigan gave the opening address.

Highlights included presentations by:-

- Steve Egerton-Read on White-tailed Eagles
- Chris Hewson on the BTO Cuckoo Tracking Project
- Mya Bambrick & colleagues: Young Birders – initiatives and aims
- Mike Coates on Fenceless Grazing
- David Plummer: My Life in Photography

Stonechat Awards were presented to Mark Mallalieu & Dave Boddington. The event included a wide range of sales and information tables around the venue. Members, once again, generously supported the raffle and Society merchandise table. Conference generated a net profit of just over £1,700 for the Society.

Recording of the speakers' presentations was coordinated by Jonno Cook, and these materials were made available on the Society's YouTube channel.

Members' feedback on the event was positive. Once again, many thanks to everyone who assisted on the day and in preparation for the Conference – which made this such a successful event.

We are now looking forward to the 2026 event, incorporating the Society's AGM. We also have a new date and venue: 18th April at the University of Brighton – Falmer Campus.

David Porter – Conference Organiser

Archives

There have been no significant additions to the paper archive during the past year. The paper archives continue to be housed in the West Sussex Record Office in Chichester, courtesy of the County Archivist. They can be seen there by pre-arranged appointment with the archivist. The electronic archive continues to be regularly updated with minutes of Council, Scientific and other committee meetings together with the relevant supporting documents. This digital archive has now been transferred to the Microsoft Sharepoint platform.

During 2026 Council will be undertaking a review, looking at how to archive our records going forward.

Mark Wright - Archivist

Newsletter

The newsletter continues with its essential work of documenting unusual bird sightings and regular Society outings, as well as news of the Society's conservation initiatives. Sadly in the past year we have published a significant number of obituaries of Society pioneers, but after more than 60 years as a society perhaps we should also celebrate this as a tribute to their legacy.

As editor, I depend on members' contributions, of both text and photographs. One of my favourite articles of 2025, provided via Mark Mallalieu, reproduced a birder's notes and sketches from watching Honey-buzzards in the 1970s. In terms of the regular content, I am grateful to Mark Wright for stepping in to write some of the Sightings roundups as well as his Outings reports, while Val Bentley, Audrey Wende and Richard Durn have continued to provide fantastic support in the production process.

Many more of you have opted to receive an e-newsletter over the past year, enabling us to save more money to spend on our conservation projects. We still need submissions of articles and high-quality photographs by Society members – please keep sending them!

Thalia Griffiths – Newsletter Editor

Website

The Society's Website continued to inform members during the year on a 'business as usual' basis. As in previous years the Recent Sightings pages proved the most popular with the new features – Weekly Report by David Thorns and Monthly Birding Targets by Paul James attracting much interest.

The website has been serving the Society well for a number of years but we did feel that the time had come for a refresh. A lot of Council's energy during 2025 has therefore seen a small team looking at a complete redesign of the website and the Society's branding, this is now approaching its launch (target date 1 February 2026).

The new site will see most of the features of the current site continued but with greater use of photographs and other bird imagery together with a members only section for the publication of the Annual Bird Report and other literature.

We hope that by the time members are reading this report the new website will be live and available to members.

As always, huge thanks to everyone who has submitted records and other articles.

Chris Brown & Adam Huttly - Webmasters

Outings

In 2025 members were offered a selection of 39 outings (actually 40 as a typo necessitated repeating the Whitbread Hollow walk on both days of that weekend). Outings were arranged on the weekend (24), during the week (12) and additionally 2 were held on a Friday evening to provide an opportunity to observe "birds of the evening" (one held in West Sussex at Lavington Common

and one in East Sussex in Ashdown Forest). As usual 2 of the weekend outings were seawatches arranged both in East Sussex (Seaford Splashpoint) and in West Sussex (Selsey).

Sussex stretches 127 km with a number of landscape habitats and outings are arranged to cover this with 16 outings in East Sussex (and 2 over the border into Kent covering both sides of Rye Bay) and 21 in West Sussex. Attendance was usually in double figures (in 2025 the highest number was 28 for the River Ouse Valley walk) with single figure attendance usually signifying challenging weather conditions (e.g. 5 on the Birling Gap/Shooters Bottom outing in 60 mph winds).

Some outings were particularly well placed for a high species outing tally for example 71 for the Dungeness seawatch / RSPB reserve outing and Thorney island with 62 species.

As always the Outings Programme was designed to provide as many members as possible with a sociable opportunity to see a good selection of the variety of birds and habitats available. In 2025 birds seen on Society Outings included: Brent Goose, Bewick's Swan, Spoonbill, Knot, Kittiwake, Fulmar, Gannet, Woodlark, Marsh Harrier, Red Kite, Goshawk, Peregrine, Sparrowhawk, Pintail, Goldeneye, Nightjar, Nightingale, Corn Bunting, Yellowhammer, Purple Sandpiper and Red-footed Falcon.

Finally, once again it was pleasing not only to enjoy the company of regulars but also to welcome new members, new participants, younger members and potential new members to our Outings.

Dr Mark Wright – Outings organiser

SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Registered Charity 2556936 www.sos.org.uk

Minutes of the sixty-third AGM of the SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY held at Adastra Hall Hassocks on 5 April 2025 at 14:30.

- 1) **Welcome and Apologies for absence.** President Chris Corrigan took the chair and welcomed 34 members to the AGM (meeting quorate). Apologies received from 14 members.
- 2) **Approval of the minutes of the 62nd AGM held on 1 April 2024** were proposed by Mark Mallalieu, seconded by Clare Buckle and carried unanimously.
- 3) **Adoption of the Officials & Members report for the year ended 31 December 2024.** This had been circulated ahead of the meeting. Chris Corrigan summarised a few of the successes for the year including:
 - Completion of the 2-year risk review.
 - Development of new funding strategy.
 - Plans for new website (now under development).
 - Maintenance of a solid financial position.
 - Another excellent Bird Report (Birdguides magazine: '**something of a Gold Standard**').
 - Great work and progress in all areas including Conservation, Database, Records and Surveys.
 - Membership maintained at over 2000.
 - Successful birdrace which raised over £2100.
 - Another excellent Conference in January.
 - Ongoing development of Young Birders Scheme.
 - Good focus on internal & external communication through Press & Publicity, Social Media & Newsletter. With plans underway for new Website.
 - Successful Outings programme enjoyed by many members.

Chris also took the opportunity to thanks all Trustees and other volunteers who had contributed to a very successful year for the society.

Adoption of the report was proposed by Val Bentley, seconded by Peter Plant and carried unanimously.

- 4) **Adoption of the Financial Statement and Trustees Report for the year ended 31 December 2024.** Ted Merrikin our Treasurer was unfortunately not able to be at the meeting, but comment was made that the Society was in a strong financial position with Net Current Assets of £103,000, income of £41,000 against expenditure of £29,000. Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Clare Buckle, seconded by Mark Mallalieu and carried unanimously.

Whilst discussing the numbers it was decided to skip to item 13 on the agenda whereby the meeting was being asked to vote in increases in membership subscriptions. Alan Swetman outlined the key reasons behind this request as follows: -

- a) Whilst the Society has over £100,000 in the bank this was in part due to 2 exception legacies totalling £40,000 received in 2023 which have not yet been spent.
- b) 2024 saw an unusually low level of grants made by the society at a level of just over £3,000 (average over the last 6 years has been £17,000). In the first 3 months of 2025 Council has already approved 6 grant requests of virtually £10,000 and we are aware of another request in the pipeline of around £15,000.
- c) Council is committed to a new styled website, and the current estimate is that this will need a budget of £10,000.
- d) We always look to maintain a contingency of 50% previous years' operating expenditure (£26,000).
- e) Over the last 6 years membership income has been very steady at £22,000 pa which until 2022 was covering the annual operating costs but for the last 2 years costs have increased to £30,000 and £26,000, meaning that our membership subscriptions are no longer covering operating costs and we are using other income to cover costs. Councils view is that subscriptions should cover operating costs.

- f) Council is working on a new Funding Policy which is now in final draft form and will see the Society looking to put out grant money of £26,000 pa for our priority objectives.
- g) Given the above Council is looking to increase subscriptions from the current levels (Individual £14 pa, Joint £17 pa, Life £200, Joint life £250) to new levels (Individual £20 pa, Joint £25 pa, Life £275, Joint life £350), it was further mentioned that the last subscription increase was 20 years ago and that RPI increases since would have seen the individual subscription increase to £26. Overall, these increases should raise income by £10 - £11,000.

There followed a debate on the motion with most views supportive, but the point was made that there could be some members who would find the proposed increases difficult in the current economic climate. This point was acknowledged and Council have said that they will look at putting in place some form of assistance for any members that find themselves in this position as is allowed in our rules.

The proposal to increase the subscriptions as set out above was proposed by Chris Davis, seconded by Peter Plant and voted through on a split vote with 31 members in favour and 2 against.

- 5) Retiring members of Council.** 3 Council members had resigned during the year, Jon Curson, Mya Bambrick and Ezra Heath, all were thanked for their work and support for the Society.

The opportunity was also taken to thank Terry Allen who has stood down as leader of the Conservation team and Paul James who has stood down as Recent Sightings Manager (after 16 years). They are succeeded by Martin Banks and Paul Welsh respectively who were welcomed into their new roles and thanked for their support.

- 6) Election of Officers.** The following Honorary Officers, being eligible without nomination, offered themselves for re-election: - Clare Buckle (Chair), Ted Merrikin (Treasurer), Jonno Cook (Chair of M&P), Chas Holt (Chair of Scientific) and Alan Swetman (Secretary). All elected unanimously.
- 7) Re-election of Officers.** None

- 8) Election of New Officers.** None

- 9) Election of members of Council.** The following members of Council, being eligible without nomination, offered themselves for re-election: - Katie Nethercoat, Tony Benton, Pat Wilder & Susan Kerry Bedell. All elected unanimously.

- 10) Re-election of members of Council.** None

- 11) Election of new members of Council.** (see peen pictures attached)

- a) Steve Gilbert – Proposed Tony Benton, Seconded Ted Merrikin, elected unanimously.
 - b) Adam Huttly – Proposed Mark Mallalieu, Seconded Pat Wilder, elected unanimously.
 - c) Jack Thompson – Proposed Jonno Cook, Seconded Clare Buckle, elected unanimously.
- 12)** The appointment of Kreston Reeves as Examiners of the 2025 accounts. Proposed Ted Merrikin, seconded Alan Swetman. Carried unanimously.
- 13) Increase in annual Subscriptions** – see above under item 4.
- 14) Rule amendments** – proposed amendments to rules number 10 and 17 (as set out on attachment) explained to the meeting. Proposed Clare Buckle, seconded Michael Wilsdon, carried unanimously.
- 15) AOB-** Jonno Cook gave a short summary to the meeting regarding the Big Give campaign that was taking place in late April.

Meeting closed at 3.20.

Downs to the Sea Update

Ferry Fields Wetland Enhancement – RSPB Pagham Harbour

Work So Far

The Downs to the Sea project on Ferry Field is now well underway and is making great progress. Works began on 11th August and is now almost complete.

The contractors started by creating a new, shallow channel. This channel will connect the new solar pump to the lagoon, allowing water to be channelled to the lagoon as required. This will provide an input of freshwater to the lagoon, to allow staff to keep the lagoon at the correct water level and also the required salinity.

3 new islands have been created in the lagoon. 2 of these were simple to make, but the third provided quite a challenge. Even with the lagoon being the driest it has been in a long time, the area closest to the road was still too wet to hold the weight of a digger. We have discovered there is about 1.5m of silt in this area which has built up over years of flooding, so even with special bog mats to spread the weight of the digger, they could not reach this area. As a result, we worked closely with the contractors and our ecologists to come up with an alternative location for the third island. This means the island has been created in



The three new islands on the lagoon

a location that could be accessed by the digger but will still be beneficial to wildlife. The gentle profile of the island edges will provide a lovely muddy edge and the non-linear shapes of the island will create sheltered areas. This will create ideal habitat for waders like Avocet to build their nests and feed their chicks.

A new berm has been created along the bank of the Broad Rife. This is an elevated area of ground that serves two purposes. The first is to provide some protection to the Broad Rife bank against wave and wind action in the lagoon. The second is to provide a raised area for the new predator exclusion fence to sit on.

The old bund running down the centre ditch of the field has been removed. This bund sat in a low area of the field and prevented water movement. This bund is now being moved to a higher point to separate the saline lagoon area of the field from the fresh water wet grassland. This will allow a greater area of the field to be managed for breeding waders and wildfowl effectively.

New spill out areas, rills and scrapes have been created. These are shallow dug out areas that wind their way through the wet grassland. They have shallow graded edges, so when filled with water, they will provide muddy edges for wader chicks to feed.

A new sluice has been installed. This is a water control structure that will hold water in the field when rainfall is low but also allow water to be drained off the field in flood events. A solar pump has also been installed. This was done by a company called Aqua Delta who came all the way from Amsterdam to do this work. They are specialist in solar pumps and are used across the RSPB. This pump will allow water to be taken from the Broad rife which runs along the South of the field and pumped into either the lagoon or the wet grassland depending on where it is needed.



New low point winding from the lagoon to the solar pump location



New scrape created on the wetland



The New Sluice



The Solar Pump showing the pump mechanism and the solar panels, hidden behind a willow screen beautifully made by volunteers

What's Next?

One of the islands was due to be topped with shingle to create habitat for species such as Little Ringed Plover. Due to wet weather, the contractors were unable to transport the shingle across the lagoon. As a result, they will be returning in December with an amphibious digger which can float across the lagoon to put the shingle onto the island. Unfortunately, the predator exclusion fence was not able to be installed in time for winter this year, so this will be installed next summer.



03/12/2025

Water initiative off to flying start as vital work is completed at two huge nature reserves

Much-needed improvements at RSPB Pulborough Brooks and RSPB Pagham Harbour have been completed as thousands of migrating birds arrive for their winter stay.

The £300,000 works have improved vital new wetland havens for birds, mammals, and invertebrates, while new pathways, viewing platforms and benches will enhance the visitor experience at both destinations.

The project is the first big milestone in the £2.4m **Downs to the Sea** project, which started earlier this year with ambitious goals of restoring and creating a network of “blue spaces” across the region. The project is supported by a £1.7m grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, while Southern Water and DPD are also providing significant additional funding.



The work at RSPB Pulborough Brooks has fixed an ongoing problem of the wetlands drying out when rainfall is low. The 258-hectare site mainly consists of grazing marsh and a series of ditches, serving as part of the River Arun's floodplain and home to species such as Lapwing, Nightingale, and the incredibly rare Little Whirlpool Ramshorn Snail.

However, lack of hydrological control has started to become a real issue in recent years, compounded by a more unpredictable climate.

New dams and sluices will maintain a steady water level and also ensure more “muddy edges”, which are essential for wader chicks to feed.

Meanwhile, the large pond next to the site's visitor centre has been given a huge makeover, with a new viewing area, pond dipping benches, a photography post and a new nature trail. The



refurbishments give people, including those who are less mobile, the opportunity to get close to nature.

At RSPB Pagham Harbour, a large site called Ferry Wetlands has been significantly improved for nature, with new solar-powered water pumps and new islands within the saline lagoon to provide nesting areas for birds, including Avocet and Little-ringed Plover. A predator exclusion fence will be installed next year to reduce the number of predators eating breeding wetland birds and their eggs, while the existing network of ditches has been enhanced to attract a variety of wildlife. This programme has been made possible thanks to generous funding from Sussex Ornithological Society, the Big Give, The Solent Seascape Project, and the Chichester Harbour Friends.

Oriole Wagstaff, Senior Site Manager at the RSPB South Downs Reserves said: “This work marks a major success for both wildlife and people at RSPB Pulborough Brooks. Thanks to the new water management structures, we now have far greater control over water levels across the site- making the upcoming breeding season especially promising. As spring approaches, we’ll be able to create better conditions for breeding waders, giving them the best possible chance to thrive.

“It’s incredibly rewarding to see the results of all the hard work come to life. These improvements are a vital step toward restoring our precious wetland habitats, which support a rich diversity of plants and animals. Enhancements to the visitor pond area have also improved accessibility to stunning views of the wetland, allowing more people to connect with nature, whether they’re enjoying a peaceful moment or joining in one of our family-friendly pond events.”

Natacha Bricks-Yonow, Project Manager for Downs to the Sea, said: “It’s hugely exciting to have completed this first phase of the project, improving significant wildlife habitats.

“Water is the foundation for all life and as a National Park one of our big ambitions is to work with partners to create cleaner and more biodiverse waterways right across the region. Nature doesn’t recognise boundaries, so our work at Pulborough and the Manhood Peninsula will create a better-connected wildlife corridor from the coast to the South Downs. Our work will also help to create lots of educational and engagement opportunities to help people of all ages and origins get closer to nature and understand why water is so vital.



“There’s lots more to come in the project across Sussex and Hampshire, including the creation of new ponds, and we can’t wait to see the benefits for both nature and people.”

