



MARCH 2024 NEWSLETTER

Dear Members

It has been a while since we had a newsletter so the committee thought that we would bring you all up to date on various bits and pieces of club news.

From our Chairman

After a Winter of record-breaking rainfall and widespread flooding, Spring is on its way and we can look forward to Summer migrant birds arriving on our shores over the next few weeks.

The amazing Swift Tower project is close to completion and it's something the club can be immensely proud of. It will stand for many years as an example of what can be achieved with dedication and perseverance.

Steve will provide more information about the Tower later in this newsletter but our thanks go out to all members who have contributed to the project through donations or by giving their time and expertise.

Mark Broughton

From our Events Organiser

Please be aware that some events have had to be moved due to unforeseen circumstances.

Date changes for your diary:

The March Indoor meeting has moved to **Tuesday 26th March**.

The AGM is now taking place on **Tuesday 2nd April**.

The Swift Tower Grand Opening will now be at the Eels Foot pub on **Tuesday 7th May**.

The Heveningham Bioblitz is now on **Sunday 23rd June**.

To look forward to in March and April:

Our next Indoor Meeting is a talk by Harry Read on a year as a lonely wildlife photographer!

A day in the Brecks with Graham Dawson will take place on Saturday 23rd March.

A short talk after the AGM by Shon Meale about increasing diversity on his farm followed by a visit to the farm on Saturday 13th April.

Spanish Trip

3 spaces are still available for the trip to Spain in September. Please contact me if you are interested.

All events can be checked and further information found on the website at waveneybirdclub.com

Helen Gooderham

From Our Membership Secretary

As at 8th March 2024 we have had 133 paid subscriptions so far and we have 13 New Members this year to date.

28 of 2023's members have not, as yet, renewed their membership. I plan to send a reminder in May to those 28.

I have also received 19 cash payments and 14 cheques.

We have also been advised of £788 donations towards the Swift Tower plus any Gift Aid.

Cheryl Deeks

Swift Tower Update

In our January newsletter it was with great delight that we were able to announce that WBC's Swift Tower is now built. Proudly sited in the delightful pub garden of the Eels Foot Inn at Eastbridge, this amazing Suffolk landmark is a fine example of sustainability. WBC, like many county organisations, is keen to assist threatened Swifts that migrate to UK shores from Africa every summer. The tower will offer nesting opportunities for many years to come, and so will enable our generation and future generations to enjoy the magnificence of these birds, whilst perhaps enjoying a swift pint! Sited very close to RSPB Minsmere, our Swifts will also benefit from excellent feeding opportunities offered by the hosts of insects that abound over the reserve's reedbeds.

Many holidaymakers, like the Swifts, wait for Suffolk to get a little warmer before they choose to visit and some opt to book their accommodation at the Eels Foot Inn. Landlord Julian Wallis is delighted to have the tower in his pub garden, as he too is a keen conservationist and can't wait to host these amazing migratory birds. Excitingly, our claim to fame is that this is the only swift tower in the UK that can be found in a pub garden!

We are pleased that this new feature, which was project managed by Steve Piotrowski with the project team comprising of Mark Broughton, Bob Flindall, Rob Gooderham and Chris Parr working together to evolve the final design. There was close consultation with Geoff Denton, of Adam Power Associates, regarding structural aspects of the construction. Also noted, and again admired, will be the ornately carved design work on the tower's supporting pole created by local artist Jason Parr.

We do have a little more to do - we need to mask the necessary supporting steelwork at the base of the pole. To this end, Rob has designed a seating area where visitors can sit and enjoy the Swifts as they enter and leave the nesting boxes in the tower chamber. Touchingly, on two of the seats, memorial plaques will be fitted to honour the memory of two of our members who gave so much to the club but have sadly passed away. These are Tony Lancaster, of Walberswick, and Paddy Shaw, WBC's former Project Officer. Both were passionate about Swifts. We thank Ruth Mitchell, who runs Admiral Tees in Lowestoft, an artist who is overseeing the design and creation of the laser-cut memorial plaques.

Let us not lose sight of the aims of this project. They were to help these amazing birds and show love to those friends we have so sadly lost. By the addition of interpretation boards, with beautiful artwork by another great Suffolk artist Brian Small, and informative text by our Project Officer Bob Flindall, we have the chance to spread the word that if we offer a helping hand then we hopefully won't lose these beautiful birds too. To complete the latter part of the project outlined above we are already busily fundraising. We have applied for further grants that are administered by Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscapes and we have received a pledge from Suffolk County Councillor Richard Smith. We always extend a very big thank you to WBC members who have kindly donated towards the Swift Tower fund.

Our principal contractor, Gilleard Bros, will be back on site very soon and, fingers crossed, all will be complete by the end of April in time for the official opening at 4pm on Tuesday, May 7. It is perfect timing for a warm welcome back to the Swifts as they return to Suffolk skies. Simon Amstutz, National Landscape Manager, will give an opening address followed by words from your President and Project Manager for the Swift Tower, Steve Piotrowski.

It would be great if you as members are able to join us for the celebrations on May 7 but please confirm your attendance with Kathy at: kpiotrowski@btinternet.com if you are coming as we will be providing refreshments. Also note that parking is limited at the site, so please do car-share where possible. It's great for the environment and for making new friends. If you have car spaces you would like to offer to other guests, please let Kathy know where you are travelling from and she will email the group to advise of your kind offer. We have contingencies in place and, if necessary, we will set up a park-and-ride scheme from RSPB Minsmere. If you are there to enjoy the reserve, you may park there for as long as you like. However, if you are there for the Swift Tower opening only, please do not arrive before 3pm. The first shuttle will not leave Minsmere before 3.30pm.

Steve Piotrowski

Clubbers Nature News

Clubbers Nature News is a WhatsApp group, created on 24th July 2018, with an aim to bring news of significant wildlife sightings instantly to interested parties in Suffolk or just over the borders of Norfolk and Essex. It relies heavily on a network of dedicated observers that are most active in the field and often meticulously cover their own patch. We are pleased to report that we have the County's best on Clubbers. The group is not just for twitchers and people less mobile may well enjoy knowing what's about even if they are unable to get out. Clubbers was formed a good two months before other bird-focussed news outlets agreed that WhatsApp was a good idea. Clubbers does not only cover birds, it covers all wildlife forms including butterflies, dragonflies and mammal. In fact, any living thing that is of significance.

Initially, WhatsApp (owned by Microsoft) restricted membership to 251 members, so we were cautious about having too many people join in case we hit this threshold too soon. However, this restriction has since been relaxed and we can now host over 1,000 members. Clubbers currently has 264 members.

Waveney Bird Club has included a page on "recent sightings" on our website since we were formed but, by the time the records have been collated and then posted, the sightings are hardly recent! Therefore, as a WBC member, this is your chance to join our WhatsApp group and get up-to-date news more-or-less as it happens. In fact, the system is so efficient that you can now twitch passing seabirds. For example, Granty (our much-loved member John Grant) was at his Leiston home having a Skype call to his daughter, Mhari, in Australia, when "ping" a message came stating that a Surf Scoter had been seen passing Pakefield with group of Teal. And then, "ping" the same group had been spotted off Kessingland. Granty quickly ended his conversation with Mhari and rushed off to the coast. His nearest point to seawatch was Sizewell Beach which is less than two miles from his Leiston home. He rushed out, got there and settled with his telescope at the ready and then low and behold the same group of ducks sped past. So, with modern technology anything is possible. How long will it be before satellite-tracked birds are beamed straight to our mobile phones?

If you would like to join Clubbers, please message Steve on 07702 341017. He will then add you to the group. You must download WhatsApp onto your mobile phone. Do not join if you don't want to hear you phone constantly pigging. Of course you can always switch it to mute. Sometimes, for example a White-tailed Eagle flying over, it can be quite manic.

The rules are simple and here are the "dos" and "don'ts"

Posts	Yes	No	Remarks
Significant Wildlife Sightings	X		
Insignificant wildlife sightings		X	

General Chat		X	Use direct messaging to individuals
Request For Directions	X		Observer to send location pin on Google Maps
Major Traffic News	X		e.g. closure of trunk roads, flooding
General reply by Emoji		X	Everyone's phone pings
Emoji acknowledgment	X		No one's phone pings
Notice of wildlife presentations	X		Principal WBC, SBG or SNS meetings

Steve Piotrowski

Ringling News

The Waveney Bird Club Ringing Group are pleased to announce that we shall be ringing again this year at Minsmere. Demonstrations will commence in the area of the North Bushes (near the North Hide) from 17th March 2024. The demonstrations will start at 9.30am.

Here is a bit of background about the Ringing group. We are now a band of twenty ringers from new trainees to those long experienced. This, on the back of the wide range of projects we run, puts us in a very strong place going forward. We have 9 trainees all from various background, and all at different stages of their training, from complete beginners to those who hopefully will gain their C permits soon. 4 C permit holders and 4 A permit holders plus 5 trainers who oversee the whole operation.

On top of all these people we also have some very dedicated helpers who set up the tables, scribe when we are giving demonstration and help with the running backwards and forwards during our ringing sessions, as well as bringing us cakes most weeks to keep us going!

Barn Owl Box Monitoring is also part of the ringing groups activities.

Roger Walsh

Social Media

Harry Read has taken over the role of coordinating our Facebook and Twitter accounts and would appreciate any news including photographs sending to him for posting harryread@hotmail.com

That's all for now but if anyone needs further information please contact me through the Waveney Bird Club web site.

Happy Birding and don't forget the **AGM on 2nd April** at The Maltings Ditchingham 7.30pm start.

Best Wishes

Rebecca Bedwell

Secretary