

SDOS Chairman's report for March 2020

I am sure many of you will agree with me when I suggest 2019 went by so very quickly. It's been a busy year as usual, and now is the time to recap.

Our monthly outings have led our members to Amberley Wildbrooks, Pagham RSPB Reserve, Warnham LNR, Seaford Head, Woods Mill SWT Reserve, Lavington Common, Thorney Island, Cissbury, Climping, Beeding Brooks, Henfield, up on the Downs at The Burgh, Goring, and lastly our local area of Widewater and Shoreham Harbour. This shows our members have been able to catch up on a wide range of birds, from seabirds and waders, our summer visitors including nightingales and nightjars and a good collection of little brown jobs. Other outings have shown our members flowers, plants and insects at Anchor Bottom and Ferring Rife.

We are very grateful to our leaders for their time, expert knowledge, and friendly leadership, being Bernie, Roger, Val, Clive, Brianne, Tim & Jenny, Tricia, and Terry.

Tony Benton who joined us on Council last March has organised many bird watching events at Coronation Green to attract the attention of the general public, as well as for booked groups which included a group of home educated children and their parents in August, and in September a U3A group from Brighton received a session called an "Introduction to birdwatching. Some events have been organised with Friends of Shoreham Beach, and the World of Widewater. All of them have been most successful and a great list of birds have been seen. I know Tony would like me to thank those SDOS members who have gone along with their telescopes to help with these events. However, we need to thank Tony most sincerely for organising them and giving up a lot of his time to lead them.

Quite a few of our members have been taken around Beeding Brooks Reserve by Brianne. It has been a wonderful opportunity to see an area which is at the beginning of its life as a precious nature reserve. Last year several people became aware that a Barn Owl had probably taken up residence in the nest box which SDOS members had donated. This gave our member Barrie Watson a good opportunity to ring this bird and by November Brianne was able to show us on our groups website lovely photographs of Barrie holding what turned out to be an adult female. She also related how Nick Mills the owner of this site and Nigel Parsons had organised the event. Already a good list of birds is being recorded on this reserve. I am sure when this wet weather stops, the ground dries out and Spring comes Brianne will be only too pleased to show members around this reserve again.

We've had a wide range of speakers at our indoor meetings which I hope you've enjoyed. Mark Mallalieu came and spoke about Hawfinches, David Boag spoke about Birds of Sea and Shore. Roger showed us slides from his trip to India. Matt Eade related his visit to Uganda, David Darrell Lambert helped us identify Raptors, and Adrian Thomas gave us a brilliant talk on the identification of bird songs by carefully listening to their calls.

I hope you all enjoyed our December "Members" meeting when Jayne showed us her garden, and Mya Bambrick enlightened us to how young people can be encouraged to enjoy bird watching. I am sure some of you will have seen her recently on TV teaching her fellow students about birds. Tim also contributed to the evening with video clips of local birds.

We are pleased to record an increase in our membership figures as Tim will explain in a minute, but sadly we have to record we have lost several lovely members over the past year. Mike Snelling died back in January, Brian Metcalfe who died in May was a founder member. John Reaney and Mike Tucker passed away, and Pat Dunderdale also recently died. Some of you will have missed seeing dear Barbara Dobbs who is now being cared for in a Worthing home.

I hope you read Jo Proctor's posting on our website in July that the Swan Sanctuary where she works was awarded a Queens Award for Voluntary Service which was presented by Princess Alexandra. Congratulations to you Jo and your team.

It would appear last spring some of the bird boxes put up around St.Mary de Haura Church were used by Great and Blue Tits, possibly a Jay and Sparrowhawk, but I think the number of Swifts seen around Shoreham was less than in previous years. Let's hope for better luck in the months to come.

Tim and Clive have worked tirelessly to hold back development applications and it is with great relief that we think Goring Gap has been awarded some protection by being awarded a LWS status. There is going to be no end to the threats of development in this part of the county and we need to thank Tim and Clive most sincerely for giving up their time by writing letters and attending meetings on these matters.

Peter Wyld is also to be thanked most sincerely for the time and energy he has spent on researching a new IT system to help this Society run efficiently which also complies with data protection rules. This Membermojo system is now up and running which Tim and Sue find is making their life much easier when registering new members and receiving annual subscriptions. Peter is also working with Council to enlarge this system so that other areas of communication with members can be advanced. Watch this space for an update from Peter on the website soon

I am sure most of you want me to shut up now and have a cup of tea, but I need to end by thanking quite a few members who also help make this Society successful and friendly. Val Bentley for organising the Garden Birdwatch paperwork, Ron for putting out the chairs at these meetings. The teams who help serve the refreshments, and Jayne Rudge who has been organising the raffle but who now is leaving us to live up north. Council members all work behind the scenes to keep this Society fresh and moving forward, and I thank them all very much.

Lastly I would like to thank Brianne who is now standing down from Council. She has been a committed member of Council for so many years I would not like to put a figure on it. The Society is much richer for her knowledge of local matters and local wildlife. Although she is not here tonight I know she will still be supporting us all in future years.

Audrey Wende,
Chairman, SDOS