

# Friends of Weir Wood Newsletter

Newsletter No. 84

Spring 2019



## Welcome!

### FRIENDS – 2019 AGM

36 people attended the AGM formal business at the Community Centre, Forest Row on 29<sup>th</sup> March, with a few more attending later for the Guest Speaker's talk. My thanks to all those who came along and supported us. The business covered the following:

1. Apologies for absence
2. Approval of 2018 AGM Minutes
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Membership Secretary & Website Editor's Report
6. Treasurer's Report & Approval of 2018 Accounts and acceptance of the Auditor.
7. Election of Officers and Committee
8. Any Other Business - Producing a Friends 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book was discussed.

The full AGM minutes of the meeting will be available to view on our website.

There were no major changes to the running of the Society or your Committee which remains unchanged:

The Committee approved amendment to section 21 of the Constitution Rules covering debit cards, which we detailed in your Summer & Autumn 2018 newsletters, has now been formally accepted at the AGM. This can be viewed on our website: See FOWW Society Constitution - Amendment 6 approved 29/3/19.

Honorary Officers: Chairman - Bob Johnson,  
Treasurer - Bob Hastings,  
Website & Facebook Editor – Tom Howard-Jones,  
Membership Secretary – Tom Howard-Jones,  
General/Minute Secretary – Vacant and currently being covered by the Chairman.  
General Committee: Shaun Taylor, Glenn Tocher, Alan Caulkett, Peter Johnson, Phil Holland.

Our AGM was followed by a talk from our Guest Speaker, Matt Eade, a very knowledgeable and experienced birder, who gave us an illustrated talk entitled "Birding in Sussex & Beyond (Antarctica)".

Matt spoke about his local patch in the Cuckmere area and some of the rarer birds that regularly visit. Matt is also the recorder for the Kittiwake colony at Splash Point in Seaford, and he spoke in detail about this site. After the break, Matt gave a detailed talk about his trip to Antarctica showing excellent photos of the wildlife he had seen.

My thanks to Matt for making it a very interesting and enjoyable evening for all.

*By Bob Johnson*

### Membership Fees for 2019 by Tom Howard-Jones.

Membership fees for 2019 are due from the first of January. Those still outstanding should get a reminder slip with this newsletter.

If you wish to renew your membership, and/or you would like to pay by bank transfer - or just want to check if you have renewed - please contact me.

Tom Howard-Jones email: [membership@weirwood.me.uk](mailto:membership@weirwood.me.uk)

### Members' Spring Flowers & Birds Walk. Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April.

The usual timetable, leaving the hide car park at 9:15.

We will start by going into the study area for the woodland flowers and bluebells which we hope will be at their best despite this recent run of warmer weather. We hope to show you some spring nesting birds before returning back to the car park for a short break. (Bring a flask)

The second part of the walk will be over Whillet's to have a look at the meadows, pond and reed bed, returning back to the car park for around 12:45.

No need to book, just turn up. Please wear stout walking shoes or boots as the paths may be wet/muddy and are uneven in places.

### Friends Open Day – Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July

We intend to keep the same general format for the "Open Day" which seems to work well and is popular with our visitors.

We will again have our moth display in the car park, and also some telescopes will be available at the hide viewing area, where we hope to be able to show you closer views of some of the reserve birds. There should be Common Terns with young, Cormorants and Grey Herons should have just nested and parents and young be around, plus a variety of other birds. It is intended to put up some bird feeders. Refreshments will also be available.

We will be having our bird ringing display, but this year we are considering moving it into the study area, rather than at the Whillet's reedbed, so as to possibly show more woodland birds. The decision on this will be made nearer the time by our bird ringers.

At Whillet's we will still have our popular pond dipping and display. Our pond scored highly on a survey due to the variety of species it holds, so good chance of seeing something unusual.

The first two meadows will still be open for people to see the meadow flowers, butterflies, dragonflies, insects etc. We also have some bee hives, our bee keepers will be available to explain how the bee hive works, and have a display box to show you the inside workings. There will also be jars of our honey available to purchase.

In the morning we intend to do a tour to look under some of our animal refugia tins, where there will be a chance to see grass snakes, lizards, and various small mammals such as voles, mice and shrews. We will give more details in the next newsletter.

### Fungi Foray – Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November.

We are pleased to confirm we will be holding another Fungi Foray led by Nick Aplin. Usual Saturday morning start, full details will be given nearer the time.

**Little Grebe** – 1 on 1/1 & 2/1.

**Great Crested Grebe** – Regular (counts over 9), 22 on 14/1, 28 on 17/2, 12 on 1/3, 10 on 17/3, 51 on 24/3.

**Cormorant** – Regular (counts over 20), 23 on 30/12, 21 on 1/1, 93 on 31/1, 69 on 9/2, up to 44 from 12/2 to 17/2, 37 on 1/3, 61 on 10/3, 37 on 17/3, 54 on 24/3. (8 pairs nesting within heronry)

**Great White Egret** – 1 on 25/2, 26/2, 2 on 27/2, 1 on 19/3 & 23/3.

**Little Egret** – 1 on 4/3.

**Grey Heron** – Regular, Up to 3 until 18/1, 7 on 3/2, 8 on 6/2, 9 on 9/2, 24 on 12/2, 30 on 17/2, 34 on 18/2, 21 on 1/3, 39 on 7/3, 41 on 17/3, 33 on 24/3 including a white leucistic bird (At least 36 active nests at heronry)

**Mute Swan** – 2 on 1/1 & 8/1, 1 on 14/1, 2 on 17/1, 3 on 31/1, 1 regularly from 9/2 to 19/2, 1 on 1/3, 6/3, 11/3, 18/3 & 24/3.

**Greylag Goose** – 77 on 30/12, 176 on 1/1, 249 on 2/1, 48 on 18/1, 2 on 17/2, 1 on 5/3.

**Canada Goose** – 1 on 1/1, 2 from 6/2 to 12/2, 8 on 17/2, 2 on 19/2, 1/3 & 4/3, 11 on 5/3, 3 on 6/3, 4 on 17/3, 1 on 20/3, 2 on 23/3, 20 on 24/3, 4 on 27/3.

**Egyptian Goose** – 5 on 26/1, 3 on 12/2, 2 on 17/2, 19/2 & 2/3, 2 on 21/3, 5 on 24/3.

**Mandarin** – 2 on 6/1, 8 on 11/1, 1 on 18/1 & 17/2, 4 on 18/2, 2 on 25/2, 10/3, 17/3 & 21/3, 3 on 23/3, 4 on 24/3 & 27/3, 3 on 28/3, 2 on 29/3.

**Wigeon** – 1 from 11/1 to 14/1.

**Teal** - 3 on 23/3.

**Gadwall** – 12 on 2/1, 2 on 6/1, 15 on 11/1, 10 on 12/1, 7 on 14/1, 3 on 18/1, 8 on 29/1, 2 on 6/2, 4 on 9/2, 3 on 12/2, 1 on 13/2, 7 on 18/2 & 19/2.

**Mallard** - Resident (counts over 10), 11 on 14/1, 17 on 6/2, 11 on 9/2, 13 on 12/2 & 17/2, 14 on 6/3, 29 on 10/3, 25 on 24/3.

**Shoveler** – 2 on 20/3.

**Common Pochard** – 5 on 2/1, 3 on 4/1, 1 on 6/1, 4 on 6/2, 3 on 15/2.

**Tufted Duck** – 12 on 3/2, 1 on 5/2, 4 on 12/2, 1 on 17/2, 12 on 18/2, 1 on 25/2, 3 on 18/3, 4 on 20/3, 9 on 25/3, 3 on 27/3.

**Common Buzzard** – Up to 2 reported regularly (counts over), 4 on 14/1, 7 on 17/2, 4 on 19/2, 10 on 25/2, 5 on 2/3, 16 on 4/3, 3 on 10/3 & 11/3, 6 on 17/3, 5 on 18/3, 8 on 20/3 & 24/3, 3 on 25/3, 6 on 27/3.

**Sparrowhawk** – 1 on 11/1 & 5/2, 1 on 4/3 & 20/3.

**Kestrel** – 1 regularly throughout period (counts over), 2 on 30/12 & 17/2, 2 on 4/3, 3 on 20/3, 2 on 24/3.

**Red Kite** – 1 on 9/2, 17/2 & 25/2, 2 on 4/3, 1 on 11/3, 17/3 & 23/3.

**Pheasant** – Regular (counts over 5), 8 on 9/2 & 17/2.

**Water Rail** – 2 on 4/1, 1 on 11/1, 1 on 18/2.

**Moorhen** – Resident (Counts over 2), 4 on 15/2, 3 on 19/2, 2 on 24/3.

**Coot** - 1 on 30/12 & 1/1, 2 on 2/1, 1 on 14/1 & 18/1, 1 on 4/3 & 7/3, 2 on 27/3.

**Woodcock** – 1 on 27/1, 1 on 25/2.

**Common Snipe** – 1 on 1/1, 4 on 12/1, 2 on 18/1, 3 on 5/2, 6 on 26/2 & 28/2, 6 on 25/3.

**Lapwing** – 1 on 18/3, 2 on 27/3, 1 on 28/3.

**Little Ringed Plover** – 3 on 28/3.

**Black Headed Gull** – 19 on 1/1, 17 on 6/2, 15 on 13/2, 83 on 17/2, 7 on 1/3, 15 on 11/3, 12 on 17/3, 3 on 23/3, 15 on 24/3.

**Mediterranean Gull** – 1 on 26/1, 2 on 18/2, 1 on 11/3.

**Common Gull** – 5 on 30/12 & 1/1, 2 on 14/1 & 3/2, 6 on 17/2, 3 on 28/2, 7 on 1/3, 4 on 4/3, 1 on 5/3 & 7/3, 4 on 17/3, 7 on 18/3, 2 on 24/3.

**Herring Gull** – 1 on 29/1, 3 on 17/2, 2 on 17/3 & 23/3, 1 on 24/3 & 27/3.

**LBB Gull** - 1 on 17/1 & 29/1, 1 on 18/3, 2 on 23/3, 4 on 24/3, 1 on 27/3.

**GBB Gull** – 1 on 17/3.

**Kiitiwake** – 1 flyover on 10/3.

**Stock Dove** – Regular, 24 on 12/1, 12 on 14/1 & 18/1, 5 on 17/2, 2 on 10/3, 4 on 17/3, 1 on 20/3, 4 on 24/3.

**Wood Pigeon** – Ubiquitous (counts over 25), 30 on 30/12, 120 on 17/2, 37 on 24/3.

**Barn Owl** – 1 on 6/1, 29/1, 3/2 & 10/2, 1 on 19/3.

**Tawny Owl** – 1 on 20/3.

**Kingfisher** – Up to 2 regularly throughout period (counts over), 3 on 25/2 & 17/3.

**Ring-necked Parakeet** – 1 on 26/1.

**Green Woodpecker** – 1 on 6/1 & 25/3.

**Gt Spotted Woodpecker** – 2 on 30/12, 1 on 1/1, 17/1 & 18/1, 1 on 6/2 & 17/2, 2 on 22/2 & 25/2, 1 on 26/2, 1/3, 6/3 & 17/3, 6 on 24/3, 1 on 25/3.

**Sand Martin** – 3 on 6/3, 2 on 21/3, 4 on 23/3, 6 on 27/3.

**House Martin** – 1 on 23/3.

**Swallow** – 2 on 21/3, 1 on 27/3 & 28/3.

**Skylark** - 1 on 24/3.

**Meadow Pipit** – 50 on 4/3.

**Northern Wheatear** – 1 on 21/3.

**Grey Wagtail** – 1 on 6/1, 20/3 & 24/3.

**Pied Wagtail** – 2 on 1/1, 1 on 17/2 & 25/2, 1 on 2/3, 3 on 11/3, 2 on 23/3, 3 on 24/3, 1 on 25/3.

**Wren, Dunnock, Blackbird, Robin, Magpie** – Regular and resident. No counts over 5.

**Stonechat** – 1 on 12/2 & 15/2, 1 on 6/3.

**Song Thrush** – 2 on 14/1 & 27/1, 2 on 12/2, 1 on 17/2, 2 on 26/2, 1 on 1/3, 2 on 21/3, 1 on 24/3.

**Mistle Thrush** – 1 on 6/1, 14/1 & 27/1, 2 on 17/2 & 4/3, 3 on 20/3, 2 on 23/3 & 24/3.

**Redwing** – 1 on 4/1, 48 on 6/1, 110 on 14/1, 22 on 27/1, 60 on 9/2, 10 on 18/2, 100 on 21/2, 21 on 24/3.

**Fieldfare** – 1 on 6/1, 24 on 14/1, 52 on 27/1, 38 on 12/2, 10 on 18/2, 100 on 21/2, 1 on 22/2 & 25/2, 55 on 11/3, 48 on 24/3, 54 on 28/3.

**Chiffchaff** - 3 on 17/3, 4+ from 18/3 to 21/3, 4 on 23/3, 20 on 24/3, 12 on 25/3, 3 on 27/3, 1 on 29/3.

**Blackcap** – 1 on 25/3 & 29/3.

**Goldcrest** – 1 on 30/12, 6/1 & 14/1, 1 on 22/2, 2 on 17/3 & 24/3, 4 on 25/3  
**L.T. Tit** – 2 on 30/12, 1 on 1/1, 18/1 & 29/1, 1 on 5/2 & 6/2, 2 on 13/2, 17/2, 22/2 & 25/2, 1 on 1/3, 8 on 24/3.  
**Marsh Tit** – 1 reported regularly (counts over), 7 on 27/1, 2 on 6/2, 3 on 13/2, 2 on 17/2, 2 on 17/3, 1 on 23/3 & 27/3.  
**Coal Tit** – Up to 2 intermittently throughout the period.  
**Blue Tit** – Up to 8 regularly at feeders (counts over), 13 on 1/1, 9 on 13/1, 14 on 18/1.  
**Great Tit** – Up to 3 throughout period, but 5 on 18/1.  
**Nuthatch** – 1 on 1/1, 15/1 & 27/1, 1 on 17/2 & 18/2, 1 on 17/3 & 24/3, 2 on 25/3.  
**Tree Creeper** – 1 on 30/12, 1 on 13/2 & 17/2, 1 on 24/3.  
**Jay** – 1 on 30/12 & 18/1, 2 on 12/2, 1 on 26/2 & 4/3, 2 on 24/3.  
**Starling** – 6 on 24/3.  
**Jackdaw** – 70 on 18/1.  
**Rook** – 8 on 18/1, 15 nests at rookery on 24/3.  
**Carrion Crow** – Resident in low numbers (counts over 5), 100 flyover on 1/1.  
**Raven** - 2 on 12/2 & 17/2, 2 on 2/3, 1 on 25/3.  
**Chaffinch** – Regular (counts over 5), 6 on 1/1, 10 on 6/1, 22 on 8/1, 10 on 18/1.  
**Greenfinch** – 7 on 6/1, 2 on 14/1.  
**Goldfinch** – Regular (counts over 3), 6 on 4/1, 22 on 6/1, 40 on 8/1, 23 on 14/1, 4 on 17/2 & 1/3, 7 on 18/3 & 23/3.  
**Bullfinch** - 2 on 30/12, 5 on 6/1, 2 on 13/1, 1 on 26/1, 3 on 27/1, 4 on 12/2 & 17/2, 11 on 22/2, 10 on 25/2, 1 on 26/2, 2 on 7/3, 1 on 17/3 & 19/3, 5 on 24/3, 3 on 25/3, 2 on 29/3.  
**Siskin** – 14 on 6/1, 20 on 14/1, 1 on 3/2 & 22/2, 2 on 19/3.  
**Lesser Redpoll** – 1 on 24/3.  
**Yellowhammer** - 3 on 24/3.  
**Reed Bunting** – 229 roost count on 4/1, 50 on 11/1, 6 on 26/2, 1 on 24/3 & 27/3.

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**Reserve News** *by Bob Johnson***Spring 2019**

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**New Tern Raft:** I mentioned in the last newsletter the intention to build a new 4<sup>th</sup> Tern raft which has now been completed, and in position ready for when the Terns arrive later this month. Young Common Terns are known to return to where they were born once old enough to breed. So, we can hope for more following the success of last year when our 3 Tern rafts attracted 5 nesting pairs which were all successful - fledging in total 14 young.

Predation of Tern chicks is a big issue at some sites, particularly from Gulls. We think the main reason why we may have a higher fledging success rate than some other sites, is that there is a complete lack of any breeding Gulls at Weir Wood, and there are very few Gulls around in summer. Our small high sided rafts deter larger birds nesting as the sides cause them difficulty flying off. Common Terns are exceptionally manoeuvrable in flight and easily cope.

**Heronry:** The Grey Heron nesting has been in full swing since February with a minimum of 35 active nests and another 7 having unconfirmed activity. The active nest figure this time last year was 39, where eventually 23 nests successfully produced 37 young. We have seen the first young Heron chick for 2019 which was recorded on the 1<sup>st</sup> April.

The White Leucistic Grey Heron is still around and nesting on a lower nest to the right hand side, partnered with a conventionally coloured bird. The white bird is regularly seen sitting on that nest and something to look out for.

The Cormorants are nesting mainly to the righthand side of the Heronry. Last year we had 10 nests, 8 of them successfully raising 16 young. Already this year we have 14 nests in active use, but no confirmation yet of young, however Cormorants nest slightly later than the Herons.

**Other nesting:** We already know of 2 Mandarin pairs with eggs, and a Stock Dove pair with young. Blue & Great Tits are now busy nest building. Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs can now be heard singing.

**Habitat Improvement:** We know there is little habitat available within the reserve for resting waders when the water levels are high. We therefore decided to try and reshape part of Pintail bank to make some improvements to the edge.

An unwanted area of bramble was cleared, we then cut a couple of wader type scrape/pools to give some shallow water with some islands and mud spits.

The ground is clay so scrape pools should hold rain for a while in summer. Several posts behind mark the cut back areas. There is still a large earth mound that we will use to make another spit once water levels drop and we are able to use machinery.

Although the scrape areas are not easily visible from the hide Car Park, we hope that once some vegetation returns, the more viewable spits will start attracting resting waders such as Snipe and Lapwing and other wildfowl.

The scrape pools at the back will provide wader habitat for when water levels remain high.

The wet habitat we made recently to the left of the hide did produce winter Water Rail as hoped. The area has been successful at attracting wetland birds for closer views. The Mallards and Moorhens in particular hang around there, hoping for food dropping from the adjacent bird feeders.

**Bird Feeders:** The feeders are put out to help the smaller birds through the winter period, so now Spring is upon us, they should be starting to find their own natural food, we will therefore be stopping feeding by Easter, as normal.

**Meadow Pond:** We recently carried out some maintenance, clearing back some of the pond weed, floating sweet grass and reed mace around the pond edge to maintain some open water. We have already seen frog spawn successfully develop into tadpoles, and both Common & Palmate newts have recently been seen in the pond. Toads have been seen around the meadows, but no toad spawn has yet been noted.

**25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book:** Your Committee has discussed producing a high quality illustrated book detailing some of the history and natural history of Weir Wood to mark our 25th Anniversary in 2021. This would NOT be a book about Southern Water, but a celebration of the various wildlife and history of this beautiful site.

Chapters, for example, would cover: The basic geography & history of the site, Water - fish and water birds, Edges - shore vegetation and shorebirds, Trees and woodland - including fungi, insects, lichen, birds, Whillets - meadows and reedbed, etc. Obviously a chapter on the history of the Friends and its part in the management of the site would be included.

We are thinking of 100-120 pages in full colour A5 format. Pricing for a 300 copy print run, would make the book about £5 per copy, as we estimate this would budget £1500 for the project and we would hope to get most of this back.

Our Committee member Phil Holland has had some experience with producing this type of low volume book, and he would be our overall manager for the project. Several people have agreed and started to write some material to give us a feel for the book.

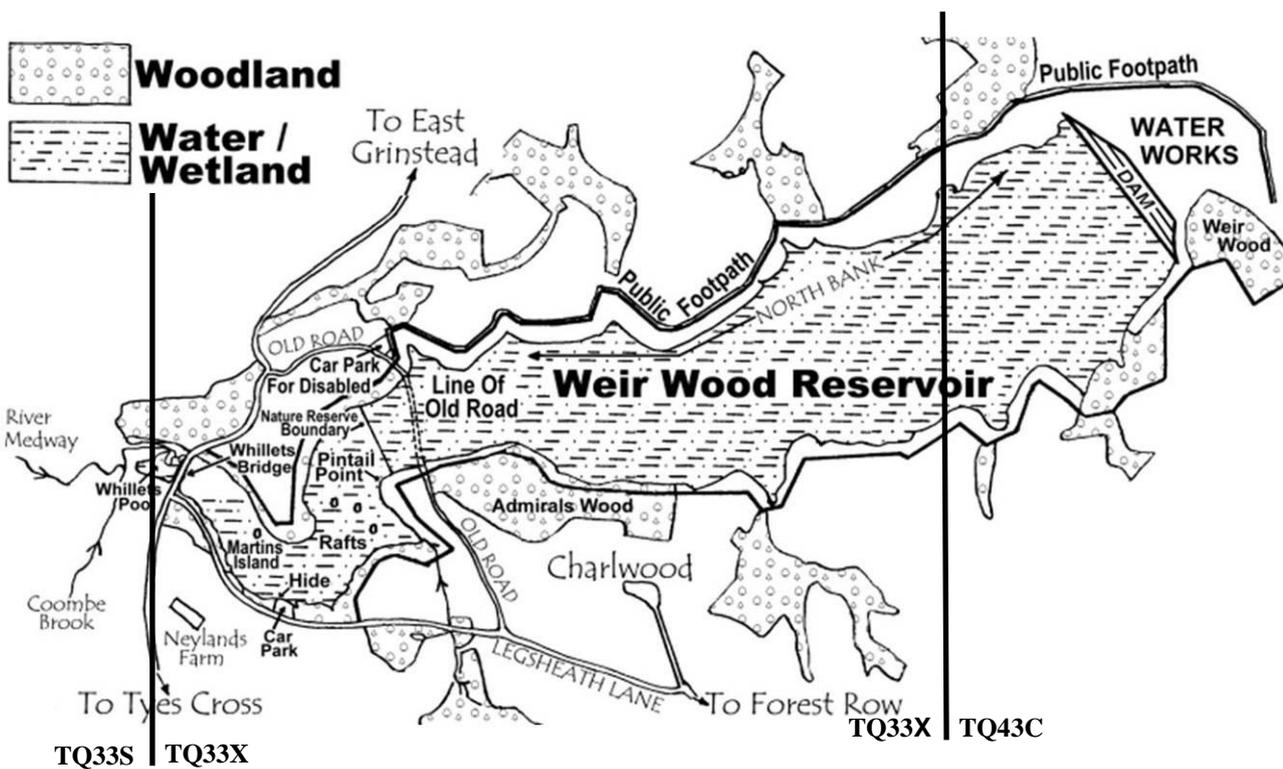
We need to know if our members would be interested in owning this type of book. We raised this topic at the recent AGM and the feedback from those present was very positive. We are now trying to get a wider feel from the rest of the membership as to whether there is general interest in the type of book mentioned.

We are hoping at this low price you would be, and that the membership would generally agree that spending some money on a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration publication is acceptable, as we hope it would be a cost neutral exercise.

If we go ahead with the book, we would like our membership to have some input. We would like some of you to get involved. Perhaps older members may have interesting stories, pictures or information about the early years of the reservoir and/or our Society and will contact us during the next 18 months so we can include some of that material in the book.

Please give us your feedback, let us know if you are interested in the book, or disagree with it. Obviously we would hope that our members would be those most interested in owning a copy of the book. You can Email: [info@weirwood.me.uk](mailto:info@weirwood.me.uk) or just make contact through the website or our facebook pages.

By Bob Johnson



**Friends of Weir Wood Society General Information**

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