



SPURN BIRD OBSERVATORY TRUST LTD

Charity Registration No. 1141408

Annual Report 2021

This is the ninth annual report of the Spurn Bird Observatory Trust Ltd.

Aims and objectives of the Trust

For the advancement of the education of the public by:

the long term monitoring of bird populations their distribution and migration;

the study and recording of objects of ornithological, botanical, entomological, zoological, geological, archaeological, historical or scientific interest in the Area of Benefit and other surrounding areas as may from time to time be considered reasonable and appropriate; and disseminating the useful results from such research.

For the benefit of the community by the conservation of wildlife and by the encouragement of the breeding of wild birds, animals and insects in the Area of Benefit and its environs.

The **Area of Benefit** being the area of the Spurn Peninsula in the County of the East Riding of Yorkshire.

Administration

The Trust is administered by a board of directors who are assisted by a co-opted management committee of nine further individuals. The directors and management committee met four times during the year and copies of the minutes of the meetings are displayed in the Common Room for reference by any interested party, whilst a summary of the minutes is also included in the SBOT monthly newsletter as appropriate. A full-time Warden, Estate Worker and part-time Operations Manager (were employed to carry out and oversee the daily activities of the charity in pursuit of its aims. Three seasonal wardens were also employed to conduct the Little Tern protection scheme and were assisted by a team of volunteers.

Self-catering residential accommodation is provided in a converted four bedroom property in the village of Kilnsea which can accommodate up to 13 visitors. This is available at a modest charge to any visiting naturalist or other individual who is prepared to support the aims of the Trust. However, it should be noted that the Observatory was either closed or ran at limited capacity for the first half of 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions. A small bungalow is owned by the Trust which provides

residential accommodation for the warden and estate worker. A certificated caravan site is attached to the bungalow which provides pitches for up to five touring caravans. These are available to anybody who simply wishes to experience and enjoy the local area. Note that this caravan site was also impacted by Covid-19 in a similar way to the observatory in the early part of the year. Three permanent pitches are also available for long term let at the rear of the observatory and a further five on Sykes Field.

Review of the year

Whilst the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was not as keenly felt as in 2020, continued significant restrictions on travel and social interaction rightly imposed by the Government once again meant that the Observatory and caravan sites were negatively impacted during the first half of the year. A number of events and activities were again cancelled particularly in the spring season. However, as we moved into the summer, there began to be a shift towards something resembling normality which meant that both the annual Friends of Spurn Barbecue and the autumn Migration Festival took place. This was a real positive following the cancellation of both of these events in 2020.

Despite their being unfavourable weather conditions at key times of the year and somewhat reduced observer coverage during the spring due to Covid-19, the birding year of 2021 was yet again a fantastic one. A total of 258 species were recorded, which was eight lower than in 2020. There were good numbers of several scarce migrants including, 10 Common Rosefinch, 20 Bee-eaters, 13 Rose-coloured Starlings, and seven Sabine's Gulls. There was also a good range of rarities, including the Spurn area's 400th species in the form of a fabulous Two-barred Greenish Warbler in October, Spurn's second Oriental Turtle Dove in July, the third Purple Heron in May, an Isabelline Wheatear, a Black Stork, two Alpine Swifts, a Western Bonelli's Warbler, an Arctic Warbler, a Thrush Nightingale, and a Rustic Bunting. Other species which had notable years included Caspian Gull, Cetti's Warbler, Short-eared Owl, Pintail, Tufted Duck, and Hobby which all had their best ever years. Whilst Woodcock (highest ever winter count), Siskin (best ever autumn), Gadwall (second best year), Woodlark (joint best year), and Long-tailed Skua all put in an excellent showing. Thanks go to all regular and visiting observers for submitting their records.

The Friendship Agreement between Spurn Bird Observatory and the bird observatories of Cape May (USA), Falsterbo (Sweden) and Long Point (Canada) entered its sixth year in 2021 and the partnership continued to strengthen despite restrictions on international travel for the second consecutive year. Regular Skype meetings were held throughout the year involving the heads of each observatory and it was pleasing to see the rapport between the partners grow stronger and the cross fertilisation of ideas and mutual learning be dynamically embraced.

The Easington Little Tern Protection Scheme ran for the twenty first consecutive year. The local project, led by the Trust, is a joint partnership with the Royal Society

for the Protection of Birds, Environment Agency, Natural England, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and South Holderness Countryside Society. See below for further details.

It is a pleasure to report that our annual autumn Migration Festival and the Friends of Spurn Barbecue were both back on the calendar in 2021 having both fallen victim to the pandemic in 2020. The Barbecue was well attended and it was a pleasure to see many friends and supporters for the first time in over twelve months. Our eighth Migration Festival attracted an ever increasing audience. It was also the sixth year that we had run our Young Birder of the Year competition in partnership with the British Trust for Ornithology. Huge thanks go to the owners of Sandy Beaches for providing our new venue and hosting a series of fantastic lectures including the key note speech from Killian Mullarney.

This summary would not of course be complete without extending our grateful appreciation to our many sponsors and supporters. The number of organisations sponsoring our work continues to grow and our thanks go to them for their support. In particular, thanks to our warden Paul Collins and estate worker Jonnie Fisk, and Operation Manager, Tim Jones together with our four seasonal volunteers and everyone who has helped during the course of the year.

A summary of how our activities have fulfilled our aim of providing public benefit now follows.

Benefit to the Public

1. Advancement of education:

Inexpensive self-catering accommodation is provided to individuals or groups who either wish to undertake their own research or participate in the long term studies of the Trust.

A census of resident and migrating birds was conducted on a daily basis with all records being forwarded to the British Trust for Ornithology, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and being made available to any bona fide researcher. The daily bird log, which continues to be enhanced by our points counts system is inputted into an excel spreadsheet and is fed directly into the BTO Birdtrack database. Monthly counts of birds using the Humber estuary were also carried out under the auspices of the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). This is a national initiative supported by the major conservation and research bodies in the United Kingdom: British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Natural England. Counts are conducted at both high and low tide in order to increase our understanding of the way in which the Humber estuary is utilized by wading birds and wildfowl. The Trust again assisted the Humber Wader Ringing Group in its long term study of wading birds on the Humber estuary. Target species are Redshank, Curlew and Bar-tailed Godwit which are being colour ringed with the aim of monitoring their movements within the estuary.

An annual breeding bird survey was again conducted. Data was gathered using the British Trust for Ornithology's guidelines for their Breeding Bird Census. For the fifth consecutive year the breeding bird survey included the whole recording area rather than the 'old observatory' area. This allows us to establish what is going on with breeding birds in our area and feeds into our conservation work. A total of 56 species were confirmed as breeding in the recording area in 2021. Little Terns had a far more challenging year than 2020, but 17 chicks still successfully fledged (more details below). Other notable successes included healthy numbers of Whitethroat, Reed Warbler, and Sedge Warbler, whilst a pair of Short-eared Owls also bred. Unfortunately, no Marsh Warblers returned to breed in 2021 and no Avocets bred in the Kilnsea Wetland/Beacon Ponds area for the second consecutive year.

The ringing total for the Observatory in 2021 was 5887 birds ringed of 96 species, – the lowest since 2002. This poor total of birds ringed reflects the numbers recorded across Britain in 2021 thanks to a very poor breeding season resulting in low numbers over the second half of the year, with no large autumn fall days and a rather poor passage overall. That aside, there was one addition to the Spurn ringing list; a Shoveler caught on Kilnsea Wetlands whilst trapping for the University of Hull's Avian Influenza project. Other highlights of 2021 were the second and third ringing records of Buzzards (one being a pullus just off site), the third Puffin, fourth Sandwich Tern and fourth Rustic Bunting for the Observatory. Short-eared Owls were ringed in record numbers (nine) due to a new targeted trapping technique being tried out. Reed Warblers (85) and Yellow Wagtails (45) were also ringed in record numbers, showing the continued spread of reed *Phragmites* around our ringing site and the excellent effort of Ken Pearson and his nets in Sykes Field. Goldfinches had their second highest ringing total (676) probably due to their slightly later nesting behaviour compared to other species. Species recorded in extremely low numbers were Goldcrests, Firecrests, chats and Meadow Pipit – with only 64 of the latter being ringed. No Cuckoos, shrikes, Ring Ouzels, Skylarks or Hawfinches were trapped at all this year.

Our second most important area of study is *Lepidoptera* (Butterflies and Moths). Three mercury vapour traps were run by the Observatory this year – traps in Church Field and Kew Villa were run from March to November with one in the Observatory garden run sporadically throughout the season. There were nine new species of moth added to the 'Spurn list', all of which were micro moths with the exception of an Indian Meal Moth that was trapped at the Observatory on 5th September. Other notable records included a Death's Head Hawkmoth, Striped Hawkmoth (the second for Spurn and twelfth for Yorkshire), and two Bedstraw Hawkmoths.

Unfortunately, 2021 was a disappointing and rather worrying year for the vast majority of butterfly species at Spurn. The remarkably cold spring clearly had a negative impact upon many of our 'commoner' species. The date which many species emerged was notably later than 2020 and significantly later than is 2019 (e.g. Small Skipper, Gatekeeper and Green Hairstreak). Numbers of migrant butterflies were once again very low, with Red Admiral seemingly being on a trend of steady

decline. Twenty five species were recorded in 2021, two more than 2020 and one more than both 2018 and 2019. Highlights included another strong year for Green Hairstreak (with a further significant increase in records north of the Point), Gatekeeper and Essex Skipper, whilst the 'standout rarity' was a Swallowtail seen on three dates in June. Unfortunately however, Green-veined White, Holly Blue, Wall Brown, Large Skipper and Small Copper all had their worst year for some time.

With twenty different species of Odonata recorded 2021 ranks as the joint most diverse year ever alongside 2018. There were no new additions to the Spurn Odonata list in 2021, so the wait for the 30th species will pass on into 2022. However, there were still a number of highlights for several species which made 2021 exceptional, including an influx of Banded Demoiselle that graced the Spurn area during early July, only the second time such an event has occurred. It was also an excellent year for Willow Emerald Damselfly, building upon first appearance in the Spurn area during 2020. There were also reappearances to the Spurn year-list for both Red-veined Darter and Southern Migrant Hawker. During the summer attempts were made to survey as much of the area as possible for Odonata, including totals from the most species-rich water bodies in the Triangle, as well as Clubley's Scrape, ponds in Kilnsea and the ditches around Long Bank. These counts help to determine species that may be going under recorded, or having their abundance underestimated, by the casual observer and help give a better perception of the health of populations of different Odonata species in our recording area.

Twenty seven species of mammal were recorded in 2021, which included an otter on 8th August, and a Minke Whale on 13th September. Badgers once again performed well at the Warren on warm summer evenings.

Unfortunately the pandemic once again put a stop to the International Young Persons Exchange between SBOT, Cape May, Long Point and Falsterbo in 2021. When possible to run the programme allows young people to:

- i) Develop new skills and experience the work of overseas observatories
- ii) Contribute to the work of the host observatory
- iii) Increase awareness of key international bird migration and conservation studies.

Similarly guided walks were not possible during the spring, however, a programme of regular walks (led by employees and volunteers) for visitors took place during the autumn, which coincided with public bird ringing demonstrations when weather conditions were suitable. The walks were once again well attended and appreciated by beginners and experienced naturalists alike.

The Science and Research sub-committee continued its work on evolving monitoring, digitising historical records and facilitating and collaborating with scientific research in the Spurn area. 2021 saw continued efforts to share the availability of SBOT data by making contact with various universities, with five data requests being provided for researchers and academics during the year. A masters student from the

University of Leeds, stayed at the Observatory in July to study the Little Tern colony and focused on the spatial patterns of nest sites in relation to one another and the vegetation nearby. With succession of the sand dune system resulting in expanding areas of Marram/Lyme grasses, this could prove an important insight for the preservation and creation of Little Tern colonies at Spurn. Regular point counts continued in 2021 and we now have three years of data to analyse from this initiative.

Another new project for SBOT was the trapping of adult Little Terns, which kick-started in 2021 with one adult caught on the nest and fitted with a darvic ring (colour rings with unique codes on, visible at a distance). Not only was this a great start to the project, but the Little Tern caught already carried a metal BTO ring. After submitting the ringing record, it was revealed that this individual was originally ringed as a chick in 2013 at Winterton, Norfolk, and now breeds at Beacon Ponds. Without catching the bird, we would likely not have discovered this and it further illustrates the value of standard metal ringing as well as darvic ringing in specific projects such as the one starting at Spurn. We look forward to increasing the number of adult Little Terns trapped and darvic ringed in 2022.

Continuing with the tagging theme, the first Blackcap to be tagged as part of the Motus Project at Spurn occurred in 2021. Using the Motus receiver, it is possible to get 'hits' (records) of birds with tags in the area. Mostly this acts as a receiver of information from birds tagged on the continent where tagging is carried out more frequently than here in the UK, but the Blackcap tagging shows the first steps in Motus tagging here in the UK. This particular Blackcap showed localised movements before providing a departure date and direction. The Spurn receiver has had two 'hits' in 2021: one from a Song Thrush tagged on Helgoland, Germany and the other a Starling tagged in the Netherlands. It is just the beginning for Motus in the UK and already it is showing some fascinating insights into bird migration.

A total of seven Twite were colour-ringed in 2021, contributing to a UK-wide Twite study looking into many aspects of Twite breeding ecology and, more relevant to Spurn, movements. It is a privilege to be able to contribute to the work of The Twite Network, who work tirelessly to gather as much information as possible about this declining and often overlooked species.

2. Conservation of wildlife:

The Easington Little Tern Protection Scheme at Beacon Ponds was managed by the Trust for the twenty first consecutive year. For the first time three wardens were employed thanks to additional funding being made available, and they were assisted by several volunteers in order to give 24 hour coverage. In a national context, and indeed for Beacon Lagoons, 2021 was an unusual year for breeding Little Terns. A cold April and wet May was felt along the east coast, resulting in several colonies, including ours at Beacon Ponds, experiencing setbacks to their seasons. Colonies on the west coast of Britain were much less affected by comparison. The first incubating bird was noted on the 4th June and numbers rose to a peak of 38 active nests on the

29th. In anticipation of the first chicks appearing, night monitoring started on the 21st June. The first two tern chicks of 2021 appeared on the 3rd July. Unfortunately, throughout July it became apparent that fewer chicks were appearing around the colony than expected. Furthermore, unusually high numbers of dead adults seemed to be the responsibility of a local pair of Little Owls which visited the colony on multiple occasions throughout the summer months. Direct evidence of predation came in the form of an adult Ringed Plover found in the owls' nest box (the plover was ringed as an adult on its nest at the colony only a couple of weeks earlier) and a yellow Darvik ring from a Little Tern chick found in a Little Owl pellet along Beacon Lane. The owl was only seen a handful of times by night shift wardens at the colony, but as a small, nocturnal species, it was very difficult to detect. Despite the intense predation pressure, some Little Tern chicks did fledge successfully, the last bird taking flight and departing as late as the 24th August! Overall in 2021 17 chicks fledged from a maximum of 38 nests, producing a season productivity of 0.45 chicks per breeding pair. This was the highest number of active nests since 2017 but the lowest productivity figure since 2018. As ever our thanks go to all our staff – in particular wardens Toby Phelps, Mick Turton and Lucy Mortlock – and volunteers, including those behind the scenes, who worked so hard to protect and monitor the colony.

Management of our Church Field, Corner Field and Sykes Field sites continued and was enhanced further. The maturing plants and trees in Church Field are providing fantastic habitat, not just for birds but for bees, dragonflies, butterflies and moths. Further work was also done to improve the habitat in the relatively newly acquired Sykes Field site, which continues to prove extremely attractive to a wide variety of birds, dragonflies and butterflies. The Observatory was also successful in the acquisition of two hay meadows which are adjacent to Cliff Farm thanks to the support of our members and the general public. Habitat management work will begin in earnest on this site in 2022.

Also see the 'Advancement of Education, section re the conservation work being carried out by the Science and Research Sub-committee.

A full summary of our records and activities can be found in our annual publication: *Spurn Wildlife 2021*

Directors

Mr R Adams

Mr T Jones

Mr A Hull

Company Secretary

Mr A Hull

Management Committee

Mr A A Hutt

Mr G Picton

Mr M Coverdale
Mr P French
Miss S Harris
Mr N P Whitehouse
Mr G J Speight
Mr K Lawrence
Mr M Brew

Staff

Observatory Warden: Mr P Collins
Estate Worker: Mr J Fisk
Operations Manager: Mr T Jones
Little Tern Wardens: Mr T Phelps, Mr J M Turton and Miss L Mortlock

Publications.

Jones and Fisk (eds): Spurn Wildlife 2021
Roadhouse A: The Birds of Spurn ISBN 978-0-9565571-7-9

Bankers

HSBC Bank plc, 33 St Nicholas Street, Scarborough, YO11 2HN

Solicitors

Burstalls, PO Box 31, Ocean Chambers, 54 Lowgate, Hull, HU 1 1JF
Hamers, 5 Earls Court, Priory Park East, Hull. HU4 7DY

Independent Examiners

Hepworth Griffiths, 47/49 Grove Street, Retford, Notts. DN22 6LA

Insurers

Zurich Insurance plc, The Zurich Centre, 3000 Parkway, Whiteley, Fareham, Hants,
PO15 7JZ.
The Caravan Club, East Grinstead House, East Grinstead, RH19 1UA

Investments

Charities Aid Foundation, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4TA

Spurn Bird Observatory Trust Ltd is a registered charity No. 1141408.
Registered Office: Kew Villa, Seaside Road, Kilnsea, Hull HU12 0UB

Signed on behalf of the charity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Hall', with a small dot at the end.

AD Hull
Secretary

Spurn Bird Observatory Trust Limited

(A company limited by guarantee)

Annual Report and Unaudited Financial Statements

for the Year Ended 31 December 2021

Hepworth Griffiths
Chartered Accountants
47/49 Grove Street
Retford
Nottinghamshire
DN22 6LA

Chartered Accountants' Independent examination report to the Board of Directors of Spurn Bird Observatory Trust Limited

I report on the accounts of the company for the year ended 31 December 2021, which are set out on pages 4 to 12.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

examine the accounts under section 145 to the 2011 Act;

follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and

state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and

to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities

have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

John A Hepworth ACA
Hepworth Griffiths
Chartered Accountants
47/49 Grove Street
Retford
Nottinghamshire
DN22 6LA

13 August 2021

Spurn Bird Observatory Trust Limited
(Registration number: 07474287)
Balance Sheet at 31 December 2021

	2021	2020
	£	£
Fixed assets		
Tangible fixed assets	433,365	377,890
Other financial assets	6,203	6,203
	<u>439,568</u>	<u>384,093</u>
Current assets		
Debtors	-	-
Cash at bank and in hand	170,666	171,909
	170,666	171,909
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	<u>(28,097)</u>	<u>(39,652)</u>
Net current assets	<u>142,569</u>	<u>132,257</u>
Total assets less current liabilities	582,137	516,350
Creditors: Amounts falling due after more than one year	<u>(127,587)</u>	<u>(151,825)</u>
Net assets	<u><u>454,550</u></u>	<u><u>364,525</u></u>
 Capital and reserves		
Other reserves	43,926	43,926
Profit and loss account	410,624	320,599
Total equity	<u><u>454,550</u></u>	<u><u>364,525</u></u>

Spurn Bird Observatory Trust Limited
Profit and Loss Account
For the Year Ended 31 December 2021

	2021		2020	
	£	£	£	£
Turnover (analysed below)		201,220		125,866
Cost of sales - Spurn shop		<u>(3,158)</u>		<u>(3,364)</u>
Gross profit		<u>198,062</u>		<u>122,502</u>
Gross profit (%)		98.43%		97.33%
Administrative expenses				
Employment costs (analysed below)	(57,940)		(44,119)	
Establishment costs (analysed below)	(21,624)		(11,422)	
Administrative expenses (analysed below)	(25,109)		(18,382)	
Finance charges	<u>(12)</u>		<u>0</u>	
		(104,685)		(73,923)
Income from fixed assets investments (CAF)		-		142
Bank interest receivable		15		63
Loan interest		(3,367)		(3,422)
Profit before taxation		<u>90,025</u>		<u>45,362</u>

Spurn Bird Observatory Trust Limited
Profit and Loss Account
For the Year Ended 31 December 2021

	2021	2020
Turnover	£	£
Caravan pitches	21,276	18,839
Accommodation fees	16,465	9,265
Donation's recived	55,787	18,711
Friends of Spurn subscriptions	29,160	26,308
Sales of reports/books	2,438	2,218
Sale of Advertising	2,847	1,600
Radio donation and rent	2,369	2,360
Tax refunds	11,356	7,573
Spurn science income	10,000	5,795
Ringing income	55	1,461
Spurn shop income	5,327	7,783
Rent from Warden	4,950	5,350
Other income	744	-
Grants and subsidies receivable	38,446	18,603
	<u>201,220</u>	<u>125,866</u>
 Employment costs		
Wages and salaries	<u>57,940</u>	<u>44,119</u>
 Establishment costs		
Rates	1,308	1,540
Light,heat and power	4,628	4,058
Insurance	1,292	2,440
Repairs and maintenance	6,750	2,460
Site maintenance	7,646	924
	<u>21,624</u>	<u>11,422</u>
 Administrative expenses		
Telephone and fax	732	1,250
Domestic supplies and services	1,792	1,179
Fundraising expenses BBQ	284	-
Rings and ringing equipment	3,535	2,474
Bird food	217	272
Printing, postage and stationery	14,844	11,311
Website cost	539	472
Spurn science expenses	45	-
Trade subscriptions	340	148
Sundry expenses	1,853	919
Motor expenses	614	300
Travel and subsistence	314	57
	<u>25,109</u>	<u>18,382</u>

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Rates	1,308	1,540
Light,heat and power	4,628	4,058
Insurance	1,292	2,440
Repairs and maintenance	6,750	2,460
Site maintenance	7,646	924
	<u>21,624</u>	<u>11,422</u>
 Administrative expenses		
Telephone and fax	732	1,250
Domestic supplies and services	1,792	1,179
Fundraising expenses BBQ	284	-
Rings and ringing equipment	3,535	2,474
Bird food	217	272
Printing, postage and stationery	14,844	11,311
Website cost	539	472
Spurn science expenses	45	-
Trade subscriptions	340	148
Sundry expenses	1,853	919
Motor expenses	614	300
Travel and subsistence	314	57
	<u>25,109</u>	<u>18,382</u>