



Annual Report & Accounts

Year Ending

31 December 2024

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 29th March 2025

**In the Kennford & Exminster Suite at the Exeter Court Hotel, Kennford, Exeter
EX6 7UX at 3.00pm**

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting
3. Matters arising from the Minutes
4. Chairman's Report
5. Secretary's Report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Election of Officers:

		Proposed	Seconded
Chairman	Vacancy		
Secretary	T Utting	M Daniels	C Randall
Plymouth Branch Rep	L Harris	N D'Agorne	T Utting
South Devon Branch Rep	N D'Agorne	T Utting	L Harris
Recorder	M Overy	C Randall	F Freshney
Ordinary Member	F Freshney	C Randall	A Collick
Ordinary Member	E Cuff	C Randall	N D'Agorne

8. Election of Auditor/Independent Examiner – Thomas Westcott

There will be a break for tea/coffee followed by a talk by David Ramsden, Barn Owl Trust entitled "Climate and Ecological Crisis? What's all the fuss about?"

Devon Birds

The Society is registered with the Charity Commission of England and Wales (no 1191647) and is governed by its Constitution. The address of the Hon. Secretary is 16 Erme Drive, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 9BN.

Names marked with * denote charity Trustees during the year.

Vacant	President
Mr R G Burton*	Chairman (resigned April 2024)
Mr C Randall *	Vice Chairman
Mr M T Daniels *	Secretary
Ms A Collick*	Treasurer
Vacant	County Recorder
Mr T Utting *	Promotions & Engagement Secretary
Vacant	Publishing Group Representative
Mr C Randall *	East Devon Branch Representative
Mr N D'Agorne*	South Devon Branch Representative
Mr R Turner	Taw & Torridge Branch Rep
Mrs L Harris *	Plymouth Branch Representative
Mr T Misselbrook*	Mid Devon Branch Representative
Ms F Freshney *	Ordinary Member

Bankers. CAF (Charities Aid Foundation), 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4TA

Independent Examiner. Thomas Westcott, 47 Boutport Street, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 1SQ

The objects of the Society are contained in its Constitution, which is published and a copy available to all Members via the website.

A review of activities and achievements during the year is contained in the Society's Officers' Reports.

Devon Birds

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 23rd March 2024 at the Exeter Court Hotel at 3pm

The Chairman welcomed the 40 people present.

1. **Apologies.** Apologies had been received from 17 members.
2. **Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting.** The Minutes of the Meeting were accepted as a true record. Proposed by T Utting. Seconded by G Burton. Unanimously approved.
3. **Matters Arising from the Minutes.** There were no matters arising from the Minutes.
4. **Chairman's Report.** The Chairman opened his report by stating that Devon Birds is a Society for all, and it attempts to satisfy all requirements from the garden birdwatcher to the birding expert. The Chairman reported on some key events during the year. The Chairman noted that a number of officers and trustees had left, namely N Armstrong, R Sims, A Colston and M Lock. He added that this is not unusual for a voluntary Society, and he reported that Devon Birds remains in good health and in a strong position. The Chairman reported that the County Recorder, K Rylands, left earlier in the year for personal reasons and has not been replaced, to date. He also reported that the lease at South Huish has now expired and is unlikely to be renewed by the National Trust, who are currently reviewing the way forward. The Chairman reported that progress on the Devon Birds Strategy had slowed. Initiatives on Reserves and habitat were being delivered but the other sections were struggling with a lack of volunteer input. There is currently a review of the Reserves being undertaken with a view to entering into a partnership with the Devon Wildlife Trust. The bird hides are also being looked at as they are difficult to manage and are not located on Devon Birds land.
Devon Birds has provided ongoing support for M Burgess and his work with Pied Flycatchers. Also, the Society has provided assistance to the Barn Owl Trust and is currently helping to fund work with Swifts, particularly providing nest boxes in churches.
Communications have changed, particularly with the new website which can easily be accessed by members and Branch Representatives. Following the retirement of M Lock a review of publications has been carried out and the publication of the Devon Birds Journal has ceased. Items previously published in the Journals will now be published on the website and in the Newsletter.
5. **Secretary's Report.** The Secretary was planning to stand down this year after 12 year's service. He has agreed to remain in post for another 12 months to provide some continuity as the Chairman and Treasurer are standing down. A volunteer to take his place would be greatly appreciated. The Annual Day trip to Lundy in 2023

was cancelled due to problems with the boat. Tickets for the 2024 trip are selling well.

6. **Treasurer's Report.** In the absence of the Treasurer the Chairman reviewed the published, audited accounts. There were no questions. Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by M Overy, seconded by N D'Agorne. Approved by the meeting.

7. **Election of Officers.**

Chairman – vacancy. The Secretary reported that no volunteers had come forward to fill this vacancy. Council will therefore operate with a nominated Chairman for each meeting until a volunteer is identified and co-opted on to Council until the next AGM. The Secretary clarified that the Constitution allowed for this ongoing situation. Treasurer. The Secretary reported that a volunteer, A Collick, had now come forward. The nomination was proposed by M Overy, seconded by J O'Connell-Davidson and approved by the meeting.

The election of the Secretary, M Daniels and Mid Devon Branch Rep, T Misselbrook had been published in advance. Approved by the meeting.

8. **Election of Auditor/Independent Examiner** – Thomas Westcott. Approved by the meeting.

The meeting closed at 3.25pm.

Following a break for tea and coffee there was a talk by K Cox and J Horn titled 'Swifts in Devon'.

Chairman's Report 2024

This year has been a good one for Devon Birds in some ways, but less easy in others. Firstly, Council made the decision in principle to work with the Devon Wildlife Trust in managing our reserves, primarily the three bigger ones of Godborough, Bradiford and South Milton Ley. It had become increasingly clear that the demands on the one hand of professional and up-to-date conservation needs, and on the other that of caring properly for the volunteers who work on those reserves were simply not possible or practical for an organisation like DBs, which has no paid staff. Our volunteers continue to do magnificent and committed work, but as many of us have discovered in other walks of life, the requirements of Health and Safety, while the object of much derision amongst many people, are actually about caring for one's people and ensuring that they are not hurt or running unnecessary risks. We were failing to meet legal, insurance and moral standards in our work, through nobody's fault, but just because of the way things are expected to be run in the 21st century.

The result is that, hopefully by the date of this AGM in March, a proper legal agreement will have been agreed. This will be for 5 years in the first instance, with break clauses if either side is unhappy, and will require an annual payment from DBs roughly according to our annual costs of running those reserves in-house.

The smaller reserves are not part of this agreement, as they add little to conservation measures across the county, and we are considering their future, which may well include their sale or disposal.

The other major project is the Swift Boxes in Churches project, to which DBs has committed a further £75,000 over 5 years. This is being run by a Working Group, chaired by a member of Council, and involves installing breeding cabinets in church towers across Devon. The complexities of bespoke construction and installation are daunting, but getting each local church to gain permission and then enthusiastically back the project has been met with great enthusiasm. Public meetings have also been held, attended by up to 100 people of all ages, engendering great interest and spilling over into individuals installing their own boxes, and seeing the wider environmental picture, from other birds at risk to the lack of insects and flowers. I must mention the extraordinary professionalism of Jerry Horn, our constructor, who does most of the day-to-day work on the project, even persuading Exeter Cathedral to install 128 chambers - surely some sort of record!

We are also very grateful to the Devon Environment Foundation, who backed the project last year with a generous grant, and have indicated their commitment by offering further grants and assistance. Other donations have been received or are being sought from other sources to broaden the scope still further.

Council held a day workshop early in the year with an outside consultant, which was helpful in clarifying our future, although we still struggle without a Chair, and we could also find a membership secretary very helpful, as this is a task which the Treasurer and others do not really need on top of their other roles. Our grateful thanks to our new Treasurer, Amanda Collick, who guides us through our finances with a light touch, and to all members of Council, new or long-standing, who help DBs to tick along. In particular, for many of our members, Mike Daniels is the main point of contact as Secretary for 12 years, but he rightly feels it is time to step down at this AGM. We shall all miss his devotion to the Society, his efficiency, knowledge, unflappable nature and his way of keeping the show on the road. Thank you, Mike – we shall be for ever grateful.

Thanks to so many others, from reserve volunteers to those who submit records, duly collated by Martin Overy for the Annual Report; in which task he is assisted by many unseen section writers and others. The branches fulfil a vital role in our Society, and those who keep their meetings running, indoor or outdoor, are invaluable. Thanks to all these, and many others.

On a personal note, I was asked to stand as Vice-Chair, and I said it was on condition that I did not become Chair. Unfortunately, in the absence of an elected Chair, I have had, with others (thanks to everyone!) to take on more than I can manage for a host of reasons, so I shall be stepping down from that role in the next 12 months, so by the next AGM, we shall need to find a Chair, and preferably sooner.

Finally: my reflection on this last couple of years is that I think Devon Birds needs to decide whether it's just a club for people who like watching birds – laudable in itself – or is it to play a significant role in conservation across the County? If we are to be relevant in an age with an unprecedented climate emergency and huge habitat and species loss, I believe we need to think hard about our priorities as a Society. We have been trying to do this, and just need to take the next step.

Colin Randall (Vice-Chair)

Secretary's Report

Four Council Meetings were held during 2024, all were face to face meetings. Executive Meetings were held as required using Google.

Following the disappointing cancellation of the Day Trip to Lundy in 2023, a very successful trip was run in 2024, in good weather, with 147 passengers. The 2025 Day Trip to Lundy has been arranged for Sunday 18th May. Tickets are now on sale from the Shop on the Website.

It is very disappointing to report that there are still vacancies for Council Members/Trustees. There seems to be a reluctance for people to volunteer to assist the Society. Not sure why? Volunteers can put in as much effort and time as they feel comfortable with. There are only four Council Meetings per year.

This is my last AGM, I would like to wish the Society good wishes for the future.

Mike Daniels (Secretary)

Treasurer's Report

Devon Birds is funded (Subscriptions, Donations and Legacies) by bird lovers who expect their gift to be used carefully and wisely in accordance with the DB constitution and regulatory authority requirements. The trustees have made the decision to utilise some of the reserves to further the aims of the charity. Hence the deficit for the last two years and planned deficit for 2025. During 2024 the charity has designated £75,000 to the Swift Boxes in Churches project. The charity, being mindful of Charity Commission guidance, aims to maximise the use of available funds for the benefit of the charitable objectives. The aim is to have unrestricted reserves, equivalent to at least three months' running costs. The total unrestricted reserves at 31 December 2024 was £132,317, which the trustees consider acceptable.

Amanda Collick (Treasurer)



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Charity Name
Devon Birds

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31 December 2024

**Charity no
(if any)**

1191647

Set out on pages

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31 / 12 / 2024.

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date:

8/4/25

Name:

Catherine Williams FCA DChA

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

Address:

47 Boutport St

Barnstaple

EX31 1SQ

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
Devon Birds

No (if any)
1191647

CC16a

Receipts and payments accounts

For the period
from

Period start date
1 January 2024

To

Period end date
31 December 2024

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Membership subscriptions	24,403	-	-	24,403	26,272
Donations, Patrons and Legacies	4,894	1,446	-	6,340	9,216
Sundry sales and events	11,519	-	-	11,519	4,032
Other incoming resources	-	-	-	-	-
Investment income	3,938	-	-	3,938	3,347
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	44,754	1,446	-	46,200	42,868
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	44,754	1,446	-	46,200	42,868
A3 Payments					
Publications	10,787	-	-	10,787	16,065
Conservation expenses	17,646	41,197	-	58,843	18,640
Other costs	17,803	-	-	17,803	12,431
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	46,236	41,197	-	87,433	47,136
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	46,236	41,197	-	87,433	47,136
Net of receipts/(payments)	(1,482)	(39,751)	-	(41,233)	(4,268)
A5 Transfers between funds	(75,877)	75,877	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	208,799	23,002	-	231,801	236,069
Cash funds this year end	131,440	59,128	-	190,568	231,801

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank current accounts	2,531	-	-
	CAF Deposit account	40,356	59,128	-
	Virgin Instant Access	88,553	-	-
	Total cash funds	131,440	59,128	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
	M&G Investments	Unrestricted	4,263	4,600
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
	South Milton Ley	Unrestricted	55,890	-
	Prawle	Unrestricted	1,800	-
	Godborough	Unrestricted	45,984	-
	Bradiford	Unrestricted	17,000	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
	<i>A Collick</i>	Amanda Collick	19/03/2025	
	<i>Colin Randall</i>	Colin Randall	19/03/2025	

21. Restricted funds								
	Bradiford	South Milton	Large Gull Ringing Project	Swift and House Martin	Work on Dartmoor	Devon Church Swifts	Total	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Balance b/f 01/01/2024	8,156.00	34,600.00		4,760.50	5,077.86	13,063.70	65,658.06	
Receipts				1,446.00	0.00	0.00	1,446.00	
Transferred			877.00			75,000.00	75,877.00	
	8,156.00	34,600.00	877.00	6,206.50	5,077.86	88,063.70	142,981.06	
Expenses		0.00	877.00	200.00		40,120.00	41,197.00	
Grants							0.00	
Balance c/f 31/12/2024	8,156.00	34,600.00	0.00	6,006.50	5,077.86	47,943.70	101,784.06	
The purposes of these funds are:								
Bradiford	Fixed Asset (£8156)							
South Milton Ley	Fixed Asset (£34500).- Excess is liquid							
Swifts and House Martins	Funds to be spent on House Martins and Swifts							
Work on Dartmoor	Funds to be spent on Dartmoor located projects							
Devon Church Swifts	Funds to be spent on providing Devon Churches with Swift box							

Devon Birds Reserves

South Milton Ley

The reedbed has not flooded over the 2024/25 winter as the South Milton Sandbank has not been as high as in the last few years. Significantly more water has however flowed into the lower part of the Reserve from the stream below the SWW treatment plant. This benefit is the result of the decision in 2021 to postpone desilting the stream below the boardwalk. Any stream flows above bank level pass into the reedbed but the tracks around the around the Reserve have not been affected. The impacts of not desilting the stream will be monitored to determine when, if ever, any desilting work is required.

While carrying out remedial work, the opportunity was taken to raise the dam in the ditch on the South Side above the public footpath by the treatment plant. This has resulted in more water being diverted into the upper part of the reedbed. A scheme is under development to divert more water into this ditch from the stream on the North side of the Reserve.

Routine maintenance including grass cutting, minor repairs and tree surgery continued. The benefits of annual reedcuts are being re-assessed to determine if, where and when they should resume.

South West Water's (SWW) progress with identifying and reducing overflows has been disappointing. An additional stormwater storage tank was commissioned in April 2024, and this has reduced the frequency of overflows. It does not however address the fundamental problem of excessive flows entering the treatment plant. SWW are being urged to complete their investigations and remedial work.

Mike Passman's daily blog (<http://thurlestonebaybirds.co.uk/>) provides a comprehensive record of the species seen in the area – 166 in total for 2024, well down on the total of 176 in 2023. The low total was attributed to fewer birdwatchers visiting the area and there being fewer birds around (winter 2024/25 has been very disappointing).

Alan Pomroy continued to lead the ringing efforts at South Milton, but disturbance from works at the treatment plant and higher water levels at Marsh Ride reduced the number and length of ringing nets. Despite this, 1134 birds were processed including 291 wintering Chiffchaffs. Firecrest numbers continued to increase (to 17 in 2024).

South Huish Meadowlands

Lease

The National Trust continues to debate their conservation objectives for their land in the South Huish area and Devon Birds potential long-term involvement. Due to the continuing delays, the National Trust offered a second one-year license for Devon Birds to continue managing the wetland until October 2025. Devon Birds is pressing the National Trust for a long-term lease as the current arrangement is unsatisfactory.

Restoration work

With improved control of water levels on completion of the initial restoration work in October 2023, the meadowlands dried out sufficiently over summer 2024 to undertake the final stage of the restoration work in September 2024. The work was funded by the National Trust and managed by Devon Birds, and included replacement of the weir on the first scrape and remedial work to the ditch furthest from the sea. Full control of water levels has been restored, and the meadowlands were rarely flooded over the 2024/25 winter and the floods have soon dissipated (the rate is limited by the capacity of the outfall under the dunes).

For the first time in three years, the Highland Cattle were able to graze the meadowlands beyond the scrapes over the summer (they had been too wet in previously).

Birdlife

Bird numbers and species have been well down over the winter 2024/25, initially no doubt due to disturbance of the restoration work but later due to the poor weather and fewer birdwatchers.

Beesands Hide

Widdicombe Ley is watched from the hide by a few regular birdwatchers, with many more watching when a rarity is found. During the summer holidays, numbers are boosted by visitors.

Access to the hide is via a track maintained by Devon Birds. The wooden ramp into the hide is about 30 years old and had to be repaired on several occasions. Regrettably at the end of January, Devon Birds decided the ramp was no longer safe. At the time of writing, a proposal for replacement of the ramp is under consideration by Devon Birds Council.

Prawle Point Reserve

The reserve is watched and maintained by a small group of dedicated Devon Birds members but few others.

Pig Nose Valley Reserve/Beesands Ley Hide/West Charleton Bird Hide

Nothing to report.

Nick Townsend

Conservation Officer (South)

BRADIFORD RESERVE

Bradiford Reserve continues to benefit our wildlife with minimal maintenance, low visitor impact & the use of limited stock grazing to control vegetation to benefit wildflowers & invertebrates.

ACTIVITIES – JULY TO DECEMBER 2024

July – another session to control the Himalayan Balsam.

August – pulled the Ragwort. Several sessions cutting back new Bramble growth around the clumps of scrub, overhanging hedges and trees and burning the brash.

September – checked our boundary fencing. Cattle commence grazing, they stayed on until early November. Set up the 4-day DWT Bat Recorder.

November – set up my trailcam to confirm the Otter is still crossing the Reserve via his well-worn trail. Caught 2 Otters on the camera this time! Otter was recorded 5 nights out of 12 crossing the Reserve. Other regulars - pair of Red Fox, several Grey Rabbit and 3 Roe Deer. Badger recorded on camera for the first time.

31st December(!) Fencing contractor installed 40 new fence posts round the woodland clumps & boundary fence to replace those rotted out over time. Need to keep these fences secure to prevent grazing stock damage to the young trees. (And escapes!)

BIRD RECORDS FOR 2024

Autumn and Wintering species include regular Herring Gull roost; Great Black-backed & Black-headed Gulls; Black-tailed Godwit; Lapwing; Redshank; Greenshank; Snipe; Curlew; Green and Common Sandpiper; Oystercatcher; Canada Geese; pair of Mute Swan; Shelduck; Mallard; Teal; Water Rail. Three Cattle Egrets were regulars during the late Autumn period.

Spring & Summer - both Reed and Sedge Warblers and Reed Bunting bred. Also Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler. Song Thrush & House Sparrows occupied territories. Peregrine, Buzzard, Sparrowhawk & Kestrel were recorded. Grey Heron, Little Egret & Kingfisher are regulars.

WORK PLAN 2025

January/February – Volunteers have completed stapling the new fence posts. Finish burning the brash from last Autumn cutting. Depending on the ground conditions the farmer may graze sheep on the Reserve until early February. It's all very wet at present!

30th April 09:30 – Devon Birds guided walk over the Reserve.

Continue Bat Survey if DWT are still doing these.

Summer – continue Himalayan Balsam and Bramble controls. Check tree growth, coppicing, hedge & fence security & take appropriate actions.

September/November – discuss cattle grazing plan with the farmer. The grazing routine continues to produce good wildflower and grassland habitat for invertebrates & controls vegetation growth.

We look forward to further developments regarding the proposed associations with Devon Wildlife Trust.

Tim Smith

GODBOROUGH

Another year of progress as the site continues to develop its range of habitats. The picture below demonstrates the wide range of habitats from woodland to grazed grassland with almost everything in between, which is invaluable given the development all around. It is also important to welcome a confirmation of Devon Birds commitment to the site and the beginnings of a fruitful official link with DWT, we already have strong unofficial links.



Fencing off the area around the bottom pond proved very successful, the whole area was alive with invertebrates all summer. As a result, a larger area has been fenced off above the top pond. Large patches of grass were cleared to make rough banks and flowers from around the site have been transplanted and seed, garnered from verges, DWT and NT, sown.

A further section of the cross-ridge dyke was cleared and we are now off the At Risk Register. Plans for further clearance have been formulated with DCC and there is a real possibility of a geophysical survey near the mound to try and firm up on the extent, date and purpose of the earthworks. A record has been located of an ancient, polished axe head being found on the site but nobody knows where it is today. If anyone knows of any descendants of Major B.W.Haswell could they let us know as it was meant to be in his possession in 1977.

Our Autumn work programme went well and the paths were in pristine condition, as can be seen in the photo above, after the chipping week which cleared lots of dead wood. After Storm Bert there no damage and all looked OK for the winter. However, it was not to be, Storm Darragh struck from an unusual direction with prolonged ferocity. We lost a number of small and large trees but none hit anything significant. The felling of the leaning ash and willow trees by the sheds in Spring proved to be a very wise decision, as that was the area where there was most damage. The real disaster was the loss of our shelter which was ripped out of the ground and deposited on its roof, the same fate as some stables in nearby fields. The damage to the shelter will necessitate a complete rebuild and you can see how the volunteers miss the shelter.



Before the Storm



After the Storm

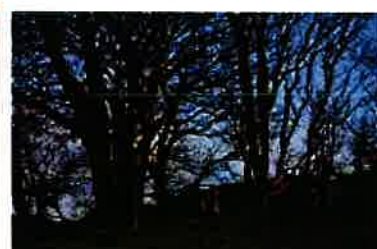


Planning the Rebuild

Bird ringing on the site remains a valuable activity and thanks go to Rory and his helpers who have added significantly to our knowledge of the site and confirmed a number of observations. Monthly surveys led by Mandy and Sue have given us a much better grasp of the bird population across the year, aided by the invaluable sightings board in the shelter. Flower, butterfly, bee and odonata surveys were all completed.

Looking ahead to 2025 we have all the usual maintenance tasks and we aim to produce a long term management plan for the site. We have been lucky enough to be given trees by Devon Treescape and the National Trust, including a lot of wild pears and crab apples. These will be planted in a designated orchard area and in areas where we have ash trees showing symptoms of ash dieback.

I must end by thanking all those who have given up their time to keep Godborough a real Nature Refuge in the middle of the housebuilding explosion all around the site – your efforts are much appreciated by everyone within the area and are illustrated below.



Gorse clearing January



Deer on a cold morning



Clearing the castle mound



Cleared cross-ridge dyke

Clearing Middle Pond by hand

New flowering plant areas

Philip Marlow



Trustees' Annual Report for the period							
From	Period start date			To	Period end date		
	Day	Month	Year		Day	Month	Year
	01	01	2024		31	12	2024

Section A Reference and administration details

Charity name

Other names charity is known by

Registered charity number (if any)

Charity's principal address

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

	Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
1	Mr T Misselbrook		Appointed 23 March '24	
2	Miss A Collick	Treasurer	Appointed 23 March '24	
3	Mr C Randall	Vice-Chairman		
4	Mr A Utting	Communications Officer		
5	Ms F Freshney			
6	Mr M Daniels	Secretary		
7	Mrs E Harris			
8	Mr N D'Agorne			
9	Mr R G Burton		Resigned 23 March '24	
10	Mr S Churchley		Resigned 23 March '24	

11				
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Names of the trustees for the charity, if any, (for example, any custodian trustees)

Name	Dates acted if not for whole year

Names and addresses of advisers (Optional information)

Type of adviser	Name	Address
Independent Examiner	Westcotts	47 Boutport Street, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 1SQ

Name of chief executive or names of senior staff members (Optional information)

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Section B Structure, governance and management

Description of the charity's trusts

Type of governing document (eg. trust deed, constitution)	Constitution dated 5 October 2020, which is published and a copy available to all Members via the website.
How the charity is constituted (eg. trust, association, company)	Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
Trustee selection methods (eg. appointed by, elected by)	Appointed by members or the charity trustees.

Additional governance issues (Optional information)

You **may choose** to include additional information, where relevant, about:

- policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees;
- the charity's organisational structure and any wider network with which the charity works;
- relationship with any related parties;
- trustees' consideration of major risks and the system and procedures to manage them.

The charity has branches for different areas of Devon: East Devon, Mid Devon, South Devon, Plymouth, Taw & Torridge, each organising local events and talks.

Type text here
Trustees maintain a risk register, which is reviewed on a regular basis.

Section C Objectives and activities

Summary of the objects of the charity set out in its governing document

To advance education for the public benefit in the study of birds and to promote their conservation by:

- (i) Publishing an annual report of bird species within the County of Devon;
- (ii) Promoting a wider interest in birds and their habitats, science and conservation;
- (iii) Encouraging and promoting an interest in birds; for people of all levels of experience;
- (iv) Organising a programme of field and indoor meetings to educate and inform members and the wider public;
- (v) Promoting a continuing improvement in the submission, collation, publication and access to ornithological records and studies;
- (vi) Managing a network of reserves in the county for the protection and conservation of birds and associated wildlife;
- (vii) Supporting research and making grants to other organisations in furtherance of the purpose.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects (include within this section the statutory declaration that trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit)

The activities undertaken by the charity to further its purposes for the public benefit

A varied programme of field and indoor meetings took place in each of the branches to educate and inform members and the wider public about birds and their conservation.

A selection of reserves and hides are maintained by volunteers for the benefit of members and the wider community to encourage and promote an interest in birds, their habitats and conservation.

Published the annual report of bird species reported within Devon, for the interest of our members and the scientific community.

Promoted a wider interest in Birds by publicising the activities of other organisations in our newsletter and on our website. Examples this year include the Dart birds sighting initiative, updates on the Otter estuary work and publicising the work of Barn Owl Trust in respect of Little Owl.

The trustees confirm that they have complied with the requirements of section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission for England and Wales.

Additional details of objectives and activities (Optional information)

You **may choose** to include further statements, where relevant, about:

- policy on grantmaking;
- policy programme related investment;
- contribution made by volunteers.

We are grateful for all our volunteers, including the branch committees for organising and ensuring there is a range of activities for our members, as well as our reserve managers and volunteers for ensuring that Prawle, South Huish, Beesands, South Milton, Godborough, Bradiford and Slapton are all managed in an environmentally conscious way making the reserves a haven for all wildlife, including birds.

Summary of the main achievements of the charity during the year**South Devon Branch**

In January, Rick Lockwood gave a talk about a major project that will provide long-term improvements for wildlife, the Lower Otter Restoration Project. This was attended by 50 members and non-members.

A birdwatching walk around the Otter following the talk was also led by Rick and attended by 10 members.

In February 52 members and non-members attended a presentation on Challacombe Farm, presented by Mark Owen and Nik Ward.

In March, 37 members and non-members attended a presentation by Peter Reay, entitled On My Doorstep-Starlings, Goosanders, Stonechats and the South Brent Parish Survey.

In April, 35 members and non-members attended a presentation, delivered by Dave Scott, entitled Birds of the Arctic Circle.

In May the Branch held a walk around Challacombe Farm and Challacombe Down, with 12 members taking part. It was led by the Farm owner, Mark Owen and Ringing Secretary, Nik Ward.

In September, 34 members and non-members attended a presentation, delivered by the Branch Secretary, Jeff Hacon, highlighting Jeff's visit to Kenya.

In October Ian Gasper presented a talk about how birds behave. This was attended by 44 members and non-members.

In November, 45 members and non-members attended a presentation by John Walters, about the Birds, Beasts and Bugs of Devon.

Mid Devon Branch

Indoor meetings of 2024 included Martin Overy talking about 'The Devon Birds Annual Report - how it is put together and how important your records are' as well as Andy Gray talking about 'Changing farming practices'. Andy is a farmer from the Crediton area with a commitment to innovative and sustainable farming practices that benefit the environment, promote accessibility to quality food and inspire future farmers.

The branch held 20 walks over the year, with attendance of between 6 and 25 people. A particular highlight was a close sighting of a Honey Buzzard on Dartmoor in June. A walk from Powderham to Turf Lock in January on what was a cold, but beautifully clear morning. A visit to Molland Common with plenty of sun and good clear views and six raptor species and perfect weather made for some happy birders. A visit to Meeth Quarry Reserve took place despite some strong winds and a few showers.

A day without rain in April 2024 was a bit of a luxury for Devon Birds members at Hawkerland Valley and Aylesbeare Common, part of the Pebblebed Heaths SSSI. In May there were visits to East Anstey Common, Exmoor, and Challacombe, Dartmoor. Berry head was visited in June, with Dolphins in addition to birds. July saw the branch visiting Mardon Down in Dartmoor to look for Nightjars, bats and moths as well as a visit to Cookworthy Forest. August's visit was to Meshaw Moor and Leigh Bridge. A field visit to Northam Burrows took place in September. Visits to Roadford Lake and Exminster Marshes took place in November and a visit to Dawlish Warren took place in December.

Plymouth Branch

Currently our membership in the PL area comprises of 235 households of the 1372 members of Devon Birds (DB). The Committee of 11 put together a programme of 4 indoor meetings held at Mutley Baptist Church and 15 outdoor meetings throughout the year.

The January talk was by the Nature Recovery Officer of Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT), Emily Cuff, who described the reintroduction of the Pine Martin to the

woodlands of Dartmoor and Exmoor. In April Mark Owen's presentation detailed the landscape management work that is being undertaken to improve the ecology of Challacombe Farm on Dartmoor. We were able to see some of these changes when he led a guided visit for the group in May. In September and November respectively, two presentations on conservation projects were given. The first by Jon Avon, who is involved in the 5 year Dartmoor Curlew Recovery Project and Alistair Whybrow, an enthusiast for Swifts, who has erected many nest boxes in church towers around Kingsteignton.

The purchase of a loudspeaker and microphone system by the Branch has improved the experience for those attending our indoor meetings.

Our outdoor programme started with coastal visits to Broadsands and Brixham and later in the year to Wembury, Soar and Slapton Ley. Four estuarine venues included trips to the River Exe and RSPB Reserve at

Bowling Green Marsh, to the River Camel and Walmsley Reserve in Cornwall, to Seaton Wetlands on the Axe and also Torpoint and the River Lynher. During the summer, suitable sites on Dartmoor were selected to observe migrants and resident birds in the woodlands of Yarnar and near Venford Reservoir. The areas of Challacombe Farm, Cadover Bridge, Clearbrook and Emsworthy DWT Reserve acted as valuable venues to see heath and moorland birds. Our evening visit to Cann Woods in search of Nightjars is becoming less successful as the vegetation increases in height.

Conditions for outdoor bird watching events proved challenging during 2024 due to wet, cold weather. The number of those participating in each visit varied between 10 and 28 over the year. We have become adept at dividing into smaller groups as required.

The National Trust (NT) at Saltram allowed the Branch to hold an afternoon meeting to encourage the passing public to use the telescopes and binoculars centred onto the scrape at Blaxton Meadow. In addition to sharing our interest in local birdlife it provided an opportunity to promote the work of Devon Birds.

Two surveys on birdlife have been carried out at Tothill Park, a popular park in the city. Advice was given on the suitability of the positioning of nest boxes.

The third and final survey of the year was completed by several teams at the NT Buckland Abbey estate. The aim was to establish a base line of bird species around the grounds, as work continues to improve the ecology for wildlife.

East Devon Branch

The branch organised about 20 walks in the year at various places around the County, with one further afield. Attendance varied between about 5 and 20 people, comprising perhaps 40+ different individuals. Two walks were cancelled due to bad weather conditions. Reports for most were placed on the Society website.

The subcommittee that runs these activities comprises 5 people, who are elected/re-elected annually.

Devon Birds Swift Box Project

It is common knowledge that Swifts (*Apus apus*) are declining across Britain at an alarming rate, about 50% in 25 years, and Devon is no different. Whilst the causes undoubtedly include loss of insects and problems in their winter range, the increasing shortage of nest sites is one that we can remedy. Churches are great for this project, as many have towers which give height, lack of disturbance, and some permanence (so many houses are "tidied up" by owners, thus removing access for swifts).

To that end, Devon Birds Council agreed to put funds towards the Swift Box Project, which includes installing nest boxes in churches and some public talks to engage the wider community.

A total of 32 boxes have been installed to date, with many churches on the waiting list to have boxes installed.

Exmoor National Park Authority Moorland Breeding Bird Survey

Devon Birds contributed funding towards an Exmoor National Park Authority initiated survey in 2024, a repeat of surveys conducted in 2008 and 2014 by the RSPB. The results will provide up to date information on the status and

Section D

Achievements and performance

distribution of Exmoor's moorland birds, support landowners and land managers transitioning into new agri-environment schemes including Landscape Recovery, inform Local Nature Recovery Strategies and contribute to the programme of SSSI condition assessments. As of March 2025, the RSPB written-report is nearing completion.

Pied Flycatcher Research

Devon Birds contracted ornithologists Malcolm Burgess (Piedfly Network manager) and Fraser Bell to undertake a research project looking to gain understanding of how migratory songbirds cross the Sahara Desert in spring and autumn. Sophisticated multi-sensor tags were fitted on Pied flycatchers recording temperature, light levels and air pressure, enabling accurate estimation of the altitude of flight. The trans-Saharan migration is thought to be a significant constraint to annual survival of migrants. Malcolm and Fraser are currently writing a paper for publication in a journal.

Section E

Financial review

Brief statement of the charity's policy on reserves

Devon Birds is funded (Subscriptions, Donations and Legacies) by bird lovers who expect their gift to be used carefully and wisely in accordance with the DB constitution and regulatory authority requirements.

The trustees have made the decision to utilise some of the reserves to further the aims of the charity. Hence the deficit for the last two years and planned deficit for 2025.

During 2024 the charity has designated £75,000 to the Swift Boxes in Churches project.

The charity, being mindful of Charity Commission guidance, aims to maximise the use of available funds for the benefit of the charitable objectives. The aim is to have unrestricted reserves, equivalent to at least three months' running costs. The total unrestricted reserves at 31 December 2024 was £132,317, which the trustees consider acceptable.

Details of any funds materially in deficit

N/A

Further financial review details (Optional information)

You **may choose** to include additional information, where relevant about:

- the charity's principal sources of funds (including any fundraising);
- how expenditure has supported the key objectives of the charity;
- investment policy and objectives including any ethical investment policy adopted.

Section F

Other optional information

Section G

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)

A Collick

Colin Randall

Full name(s)

Amanda Collick

Colin Randall

Position (eg Secretary, Chair, etc)

Treasurer

Vice-Chairman

Date

29/03/2025

