



Wash Wader Research Group

Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31st
December 2024

Charity Number 1196663

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Charity Trustees

Philip Atkinson	Chair	Elected: 30th November 2021
Katherine Bowgen	Chair	Retired: 8 June 2024
Kirsty Turner	Hon. Treasurer	Elected: 27th June 2021
Guy Anderson	Vice Chair	Elected: 27th June 2021
David King		Elected: 8th April 2023
Michele Shaw		Elected: 8th April 2023
Mark Smart	Vice Chair	Deceased: 3 February 2024
Molly Brown		Elected: 8th June 2024

Charity Address and registered office

13 Hooks Hill Road, Sheringham, NR26 8NL

Registration

Charity number 196663

Bankers

HSBC

Co-operative Bank

Aware of responsibilities

The trustees are aware of their responsibilities to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity. They are also aware of the responsibility for maintaining proper accounting records and safeguarding the assets of the charity. The trustees believe that the Wash Wader Research Group is exempt from audit under Section 145(1) of the Charities Act 2011 and instead has had its accounts examined by an independent examiner.

Report of the Trustees

For the period 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024

Activities

The Trustees have paid due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in deciding what activities should be undertaken. The Charity's activities increase the understanding of wild bird populations that make use of The Wash estuary particularly in the areas of habitat preferences, food supply and migration patterns. Through training of people from the UK and further afield alongside the manufacture and supply of specialist equipment we promote safe catching and monitoring of wading birds (family: *Charadriidae*) and educate and inform the general public.

Objectives

The Charity's objectives are:

To advance the education of the public in the study and understanding of wild bird populations using The Wash estuary in particular but not exclusively by:

- A. Undertaking research in the United Kingdom and overseas, the useful results of which will be disseminated for public benefit, into their ecology, demography, behaviour, other aspects of their biology, and related matters.
- B. Supporting, assisting and helping to develop the skills of others doing similar work, both elsewhere in the United Kingdom and overseas.

Status

The organisation is a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) that was incorporated and registered as a charity on 19th November 2021 under the number 1196663. The charity is governed following its approved constitution.

Organisation Structure

The Charity is governed by its Board of Trustees. Under the Charity's Constitution the Board of Trustees comprises the Chairman and up to six other Trustees appointed at the AGM. At the time of this report there are six elected Trustees. The number of trustees must not fall below three and one third of the Trustees retire annually by rotation. The Board of Trustees may at any time co-opt a person willing to be appointed as a Trustee to fill a vacancy in their number but a co-opted trustee holds office only until the next AGM when they must be voted in. Decisions are made by virtue of a two-thirds majority of votes cast at a Board meeting. The board met on 5 occasions in 2024. The board is assisted by three working groups for maintenance, equipment and communications and one advisory group for science. The membership of these groups includes individuals from across the general WWRG membership with appropriate expertise and experience. If the CIO is wound up, the members of the CIO have no liability to contribute to its assets and no personal responsibility for settling its debts and liabilities. The total number of such guarantees on 31st December 2024 was 153 memberships.

Review of activities and developments from 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024

The year was overshadowed by the news of the untimely death of our friend and colleague Mark Smart who died in his sleep on 3rd February 2024. Mark had been a stalwart in the group for many decades and his energy and dynamism made him a central member of the group. Described in his eulogy as a 'diesel engine of a man', this summed him up to all who knew him. His determination and strength was a force to be reckoned with and he was hugely respected by all who knew him. He is very sorely missed. His contribution to the group will be marked in the biennial report.

At the time of his death, Mark was Vice Chairman of WWRG and it was planned that he would stand for election as Chair at the 2024 AGM. This was not to be and Phil Atkinson and Guy Anderson were elected to the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair.

During the year, WWRG continued with its core activities, monitoring and catching waders on The Wash and providing outreach and education alongside increasing scientific knowledge of these species, their behaviours and their habitats. Its core funding from membership was supported by its trading of specialist catching equipment and scientific data requests.

Fieldwork

Over the year, the fieldwork teams spent 39 days in the field, 87 people took part and 762 volunteer days were spent in the field. A total of 11 cannon net catches were made and 15 mist-netting sessions were carried out. A total of 2,486 birds were caught (2,340 new and 146 controls or retraps).

The group continues to dedicate fieldwork time to identifying previously colour-marked waders around the Wash. We recorded over 1,200 sightings of birds marked in six separate projects run by the group and over 200 sightings of birds marked by other wader research groups. We continue to develop an online data entry portal ("Shiny") which provides instant feedback to observers (both the general public and group members) regarding the ringing location and subsequent encounters of marked birds. We have now cleared the backlog of over 10 years of data entry for Eurasian Curlew sightings to the British Trust for Ornithology. The details of over 6,000 sightings form a major part of a flyway level analysis of Curlew movements currently being undertaken by researchers collaborating with the group. Similar work is also underway to complete data entry and analyse Bar-tailed Godwit movements. A recently published paper regarding Black-tailed Godwit movements on the Eastern Atlantic flyway used resighting and colour ringing data with extensive historic contributions from the group. The group has been able to contribute frequent observations of "headstarted" Curlew released as part of the East of England Curlew recovery project. These birds are regularly encountered alongside Curlew colour-marked by WWRG.

No new GPS tagging was conducted in 2024 due to issues with existing deployed tags failing to transmit their data over the mobile network while in the UK. However, deployed tags on Curlews and Bar-tailed Godwits do transmit data once connected to continental European mobile networks, so we continue to receive information on most of the 30+ tagged curlews, and a spring migration movement to the Wadden Sea in the Netherlands of one of the tagged bar-tailed godwits. The data from tagged curlews is contributing to several collaborative projects with a network of European researchers, including the migration across the North Sea and potential to interact with offshore windfarms, and the connectivity of different sites across the East Atlantic Flyway.

Science and outreach

There were 13 blog posts on our website, and posts on Twitter and Facebook. One data request was received and Red Knot biometrics were sent to Jan van Gils (NIOZ - Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research) who was looking at changes in body size in relation to environmental change. One publication that used WWRG data was produced in 2024: Two group members, Sam Franks and Katharine Bowgen have been acting as co-supervisors for Isla Botting, a PhD student at Liverpool John Moores University who is studying movement and behavioural ecology of Red Knot who winter on several UK estuaries including the Wash and who has been collecting faecal samples from birds caught during WWRG trips. We are working with the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust to develop a proposal for volunteer surveys of waders using farmland on the Lincolnshire side of the Wash. Twelve members volunteered with the Delaware Shorebird Project in 2024.

Publications

Kirkland, M., Atkinson, P.W., Clark, J.A. & Robinson, R.A. (2024) *How effective has the management of cockle and mussel fisheries on The Wash estuary been in ensuring that there is sufficient food for birds?* BTO Research Report 770.

Maintenance of our field base and field kit

Apart from the regular catching trips, volunteers undertook two maintenance weekends and regular visits to work on the garden and repair fencing. The garden is looking much better now than it has been for some years. The Old School House underwent a major electrical upgrade to bring it up to modern standards and prepare it for potential solar panels and car chargers. Various plumbing issues were also fixed but this is an ongoing process. The office had a makeover and paint which was overdue. The Operations Committee also bought new lights for guiding fieldwork teams on the saltmarsh when mist-netting and the kitchen equipment was updated. We applied for a grant from another wader charity, WaderQuest, and agreed to produce some shared communications and they kindly provided funding (~£1,200) to purchase a complete set of new radios for the group. Our thanks to all those, particularly the house and maintenance committees for ensuring the upkeep of our fieldwork base.

Current and historical data

Current data were checked and submitted to the BTO for inclusion in the Britain & Ireland data. We have continued to make progress cleaning archive data, focussing on 1970- 1981. These data will also be added to the BTO database in due course. Following our feedback to BTO on bulk data loading in 2023 some issues were ironed out and we continued to work on bulk uploading both for colour-mark and ringing data. From the beginning of 2025, all our current data will go through the bulk upload system, greatly simplifying the process.

Communications

The electronic newsletter and virtual discussion groups continue to be appreciated and used with many members able to discuss additional thoughts on WWRG and waders throughout the year even when unable to attend trips. Ten membership newsletters were circulated in 2024. These included interesting bird ringing recoveries from birds ringed or seen during fieldwork, papers and blogs relevant to wader conservation, committee updates and fieldwork trip reports. Other communications include a WhatsApp group (open to anyone who has attended a trip) for more informal chat, providing advice, support and friendship.

Community Engagement

The online activities of the group through the regular blogs, Facebook and Twitter posts have had high levels of interaction and promoted engaging discussions with local

stakeholders about waders' use of their land and habitats. Whilst conducting fieldwork in more public locations for catching and resighting birds, group members were able to interact with the passing general public - explaining our research and how catching and then subsequently monitoring birds (through GPS tagging, colour-marking and resighting/recatching) has increased our knowledge of waders' behaviour, ecology, habitat preferences, annual survival rates and lifespans. The Wash report (biennial) is also produced and distributed to all landowners and stakeholders as well as interested bodies (such as the BTO) and our members. Group members gave talks about our work to North East Norfolk Bird Club and RSPB staff.

Trustees and Officers

At the June 2024 AGM, Phil Atkinson (Chair), Guy Anderson (Vice-Chair), Kirsty Turner (Treasurer), Molly Brown, David King, Michele Shaw were (re-)elected as trustees.

Reserves and Investment Policy

The Trustees have reviewed the needs for reserves in line with the guidance issued by the Charities Commission.

As most income is generated from fieldwork charges, selling equipment and selling specialist expert services and varies widely, and regular membership income is insufficient to meet regular ongoing costs, Trustees will endeavour to set aside sufficient unrestricted funds to enable the Charity to meet its basic commitments, for two years. These funds will be kept in an interest bearing account.

These basic commitments include the cost of servicing the Old School House, insurance and health and safety considerations.

The Trustees believe that reserves need to be at this level to ensure that the Charity can continue to function should there be a shortfall in grant revenue. At 2024 prices, the amount to be kept in reserve is £16,500.

The required financial reserve will be reviewed annually, and noted in the minutes of the Board of Trustees at the time of submission of the annual accounts.

Risks

The Board of Trustees regularly reviews the risks to which the charity might be exposed and can confirm that systems have been established to mitigate those risks. The financial situation and risks are reviewed at Trustee meetings.

Funds

In 2023 the Charity received donations for two specific named causes: a bursary account and contributions towards the porch replacement. The accounts for these have been listed separately in the income and expenditure summary.

Financial Summary

This Financial Summary covers the period from 1 January 2024 to 31st December 2024.

Total charity cash funds at 31st December 2024 = £51,140.13 (plus £165 on Travelex card).

The WWRG financial reserves policy sets out that two years reserves (at present £16,500) are to be ringfenced. This is to cover servicing the main asset of the group, the Old School House, for a 2-year period. This money is held in an account with HSBC separate from the 'day-to-day' WWRG account with the Co-operative Bank.

WWRG have restricted funds in the form of a legacy from Mark Smart who died during this financial period. A development bursary in his name has been established and stands at £9,224.59 (this also includes the previous development bursary fund).

The principal sources of funding for the WWRG are memberships and donations, income from fieldwork, trading specialist equipment and providing scientific services. Income in this reporting period totalled £90,008.82.

The main expenditure of the group are the costs associated with running fieldwork, maintaining the Old School House field base, and the purchase of ringing equipment for the group's activities. Total expenditure for this financial period was £60,020.50.

The Group's assets have not changed significantly during this accounting period.

WWRG Receipts and Payments summary 1/1/24 - 31/12/24

<u>RECEIPTS 2024</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>PAYMENTS 2024</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
Membership (annual and temporary)	3,056.00	2,342.00	OSH maintenance and consumables	7,556.92	1,516.31
Donations	23,821.80	5,122.85	Services for OSH	3,832.86	4,181.62
Donations to MAS legacy	8,067.94				
Donations towards porch		8,675.00	Porch costs		16,716.02
Donations for bursary fund		2,500.00	Bursary use: flight to Delaware	704.44	638.91
Grant funding for radios	1,183.92		Radios	1,183.92	
Gift Aid for previous year	4,142.47	2,728.09	Insurance	2,622.10	2,433.18
Fieldwork Charges UK	7,924.93	8,302.51	Costs of running Fieldwork	5,413.07	6,391.81
Use of field base	75.00	137.50	Fieldwork Equipment	7,378.17	3,590.56
Scientific services	31,688.98	26,605.24	Costs of servicing scientific contracts	18,649.90	25,114.35
Trading	9,655.85	2,235.06	Servicing Trading	1,921.51	1,568.63
Bank interest	391.93	93.99	Prepayment for 2025 fieldwork costs	10,556.26	7,020.84
Misc		100.00	Report Compilation & distribution		1,527.49
			Bank Charges	60.00	60.00
			Misc (website hosting and burglar alarm)	141.35	123.47
TOTAL RECEIPTS	£ 90,008.82	58,842.24	TOTAL PAYMENTS	£ 60,020.50	70,883.19
NET RECEIPT/(PAYMENT)	£ 29,988.32	(12,040.95)			
CASH AT 1/1	£ 21,151.81	33,192.76			
CASH AT 31/12	£ 51,140.13	21,151.81			

Registered Charity Number 1196663. enquiries@wwrg.org.uk. wwrg.org.uk.
Registered office: 13 Hooks Hill Road, Sheringham, NR26 8NL

Wash Wader Research Group

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31st December 2024

	As at 31/12/24	As at 31/12/23
	£	£
FIXED ASSETS (NOTE 2)		
Old School House	425,000.00	425,000.00
House contents	31,585.50	28,076.00
Fieldwork Equipment and trailers	38,138.00	38,138.00
	<u>494,723.50</u>	<u>491,214.00</u>
 TOTAL FIXED ASSETS	 494,723.50	 491,214.00
 CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash at bank and in hand:		
Co-operative bank	20,368.06	21,135.65
HSBC	30,772.07	16.16
	<u>51,140.13</u>	<u>21,151.81</u>
Other monetary assets	165.00	742.96
Total monetary assets	<u>51,305.13</u>	<u>21,894.77</u>
 Debtors	 0	 0
 TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	 <u>51,305.13</u>	 <u>21,894.77</u>
 TOTAL ASSETS	 546,028.63	 513,108.77
 Creditors	 0	 0
 TOTAL NET ASSETS	 546,028.63	 513,108.77
 CHARITY FUNDS (NOTE 4)		
Unrestricted	538,804.04	501,933.77
Restricted	9,224.59	11,175.00
 TOTAL CHARITY FUNDS	 <u>546,028.63</u>	 <u>513,108.77</u>

Notes to the accounts:

1 - These accounts for the WWRG Charity cover the period 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024.

2 - When considering assets, the values for contents, trailers and fieldwork equipment are those used for insurance purposes. Fieldwork equipment will be maintained, and replacement equipment will be purchased when necessary. A physical stock-take of fieldwork equipment is made annually but no values are assigned to individual items.

Property is valued as per surveyors valuation in 2022.

Assets are not depreciated but are valued at acquisition/replacement cost and not considered to be disposable.

In 2023 Trailers, ring stocks and netting were reported separately - for 2024 they are included in the contents and equipment amounts.

3 - No members have requested the charity to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year.

The trustees acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charities

4 - Restricted Funds

	At 1 January 2024	Income	Expenses	At 31 December 2024
Porch Fund	8,675	-	(8,675)	-
Bursary Fund	2,500	8,068	(1,343)	9,225
Total	11,175	8,068	(10,018)	9,225

Approved and agreed by WWRG Board of Trustees on

Signed  Chair
Treasurer

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Date 25/6/25

25/6/25

Examination of WWRG accounts for period 1 Jan 2024 to 31 Dec 2024

I report to the Trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 December 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 2011 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 all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 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:

- 1 accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; or
- 2 the accounts do not accord with those 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: 16/7/2025

Giles Kerkham FCA DChA

Date:

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Chartered accountants
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