

The 2020 season was one like no other in the history of the Observatory as the whole world was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In February, we held a Members' Day in Penkridge, which was attended by several Friends of BBFO as well as members of the West Midland Bird Club.

Our Warden and Director of Operations for 2020 was Steve Stansfield. Lewis Hooper had decided he would not be returning as Assistant Warden for the season and George Dunbar was appointed to fill the post. Sam Prettyman returned for a second year as Assistant Warden.

The Observatory staff returned to the island just before the UK lockdown commenced and were in quarantine for 14 days after their arrival. Thereafter, as they were all free of symptoms, they formed a bubble with the other island residents.

A Barn Owl was trapped within hours of their arrival on the island. It had wintered in the tractor-shed and, although it had kept the mice numbers down, it had made a considerable mess in there!

As lockdown continued, BBFO and Bardsey Island Trust had regular video meetings to keep abreast of the developing situation and we had to soon start cancelling guests and refunding the monies that had been paid for their stays on the island. Some were very generous and allowed us to keep the deposits, and in some instances their full payments

The lack of guests made it possible for some remedial work to be carried out in Cristin, such as removing the lime render from the common room wall.

The daily census of the migrant birds and ringing programme began and as spring progressed, our other monitoring projects which we undertake as part of our management agreement with the Welsh Countryside agency (NRW) continued. As we were unable to welcome additional staff and volunteers, we had to make adjustments to our workload. However, we contacted the BTO to clarify the situation with regards to ringing and were told we could go ahead, as the whole island was effectively the boundary of our property and there was no chance of contact with the public.

The restrictions caused by the pandemic meant that BBFO lost its main revenue stream, from staying guests, in the early part of the year. At that time, we anticipated that we could expect as much as a £20,000 excess of expenditure over income for the year. However, due to various grants made available, fundraising and many generous donations, the Observatory had a good year financially.

During the early part of the year, the two Assistant Wardens moved into the south side of Cristin. In June, we found that we would be able to welcome guests in the lodge as long as

we did not run as a hostel. We therefore let the south side as a single unit, creating a self-contained unit in the north side for the staff.

Eventually, in Mid-July we took our first guests of the year and we carried on until the next lockdown in October, having just a single family unit or bubble in the lodge at any one time. This meant that the number of guests staying in 2020 was a record low. Only eight weeks were booked between lockdowns and a total of 23 guests managed to stay.

Spring migration was reasonable in 2020, with some class birds and good arrivals of migrants.

The first notable arrival of was on 9 April, when 101 Willow Warblers were recorded; prior to this there had only been low double figures. The 11th produced 226, but the highest count of the spring was had on 16th when 455 were counted across the island; this also coincided with the largest count of Blackcaps – 209. Redstarts were in reasonable numbers too: there were ten bird-days in April. It was also a good spring for Black Redstart: after 21 bird-days in March, there were then a further ten in April. At sea, singles of both Great Northern and Red-throated Diver were recorded, along with the spring's only Osprey, which flew north.

May was exceedingly dry, with southerly winds for the most part, occasionally very strong at 40 m.p.h. or so. Many resident birds around the island were carrying food and nest building from the start of the month, but we were still in the late throes of spring migration. Sedge Warblers peaked at 27 on the 6th. Spotted Flycatchers saw reasonable passage with the highest count of 30 on the 27th. Highlights of the month, however, were a male Greenish Warbler at Cristin and a Woodchat Shrike on 29th. On 30th a Shore Lark was seen on the South End and a singing Blyth's Reed Warbler was recorded at Cristin.

June saw passage slowing; however, 'June rarities' are renowned, and on 4th a singing male Common Rosefinch was the first of three singing males this month.

The next rarity occurred on 8th when the second Blyth's Reed Warbler of the spring was heard singing from dense cover in the Observatory Garden and a Rose-coloured Starling was noted on 13th.

Unfortunately this year's Members' Weekend had to be cancelled, but the AGM took place via Zoom. It was well attended and after the business part of the AGM, the Director of Operations gave a presentation on the 2019 season.

Early autumn saw wader numbers began to build towards the end of July, with Common Sandpipers reaching double figures. Passerines began to move, with 203 Willow Warblers counted on 24th. A Melodious Warbler at Tŷ Capel was the first record for four years and the first scarcity of autumn. Strong winds towards the end of the month produced some movement at sea with four Arctic Skuas, two Great Skuas and 117 Common Scoter passing.

These southerly winds produced a remarkable run of Yellow-legged Gull records, with over ten individuals being recorded.

The influx of Yellow-legged Gulls continued into the first week of August; these were also interspersed with the earliest ever autumn Sabine's Gull off the South End with Kittiwakes on 3rd. By mid-month passage had increased and on 15th an Icterine Warbler appeared at Nant in the evening, along with a Wryneck, which was the first of four in August. An arrival of Willow Warblers on 16th saw 407 recorded along with five Pied Flycatchers. On 16th a first-winter Citrine Wagtail was heard calling near the Narrows and was then found on Solfach on 20th, remaining until 28th. Sea passage began to improve towards the end of the month, and Grey Phalaropes, Long-tailed Skuas, Roseate Terns, Little Terns, Black Terns and Sooty Shearwaters were all recorded on several dates.

September began well, and Wrynecks were a large feature of the month, with six individuals being recorded over eight days. The first Lapland Bunting was seen on 5th, followed by the second earliest record of Yellow-browed Warbler on 18th. Seawatching in the first half of the month was relatively productive, with two Sooty Shearwaters, two Grey Phalaropes, one Long-tailed Skua and two Roseate Terns being the highlights. Late September improved, with the highlights being three Curlew Sandpipers, two Little Stints, two Sooty Shearwaters, 21 Balearic Shearwaters, one Black-throated Diver, one Great Crested Grebe, one Sabine's Gull and one Great White Egret. An Osprey was seen on 16th, and a Long-eared Owl was present between 11th and 15th. A further two Yellow-browed Warblers and seven Lapland Buntings were recorded, and the first Firecrest of the autumn appeared on 20th on Pen Cristin.

October proved productive. Chaffinch passage was poor; however, Redpolls moved through in their hundreds. Crossbills, Lapland Buntings, and Woodlarks were recorded in single figures. The only thrush movement produced 500 Redwings and 150 Blackbirds on the 14th. A late passage of Hirundines came on the 21st, with 389 Swallows and 53 House Martins.

With Westerly gales on several days, the sea produced highlights including one Red-throated Diver, three Black-throated Divers, one Great Northern Diver, one Great Crested Grebe, one Balearic Shearwater, four Sooty Shearwaters, one Leach's Petrel, five Pale-bellied Brent Geese, six Pintail, one Goldeneye, four Eider, seven Red-breasted Mergansers, one Grey Phalarope, two Pomarine Skuas, five Arctic Skuas, 23 Great Skuas, one Little Gull and a Sabine's Gull. The most unusual seawatching record of the year was a Nightjar which flew south along the West Coast on the 7th!

Apart from the expected species, there was a good scattering of scarce and rare birds in the month. The only major rarity of the year was found on 3rd in the form of an Eastern Yellow Wagtail in the Lowlands, it remained there until the 6th; this was a new bird for the island and the second for Wales. A Marsh Warbler was trapped 15th. Other scarcities included two Whooper Swans, one Hen Harrier, three Jack Snipe, two 'Eastern' Lesser

Whitethroats, at least ten Yellow-browed Warblers, three Firecrests, two Black Redstarts and a Richard's Pipit.

Thanks are due to the few volunteers we were able to have on the island in 2020: Mark Carter, who gave valuable assistance with the installation of frames for the solar panels, to Josie Hewitt, Dan Owen, and Alex Starace, our only intern this year.

We are grateful to everyone at Cwrt farm (especially Angharad and Carwyn) for their assistance with various aspects of the work of the Observatory during the year, and for accepting deliveries on our behalf. The residents on the island, Ernest and Christine Evans, Gareth and Meriel Roberts provided invaluable assistance throughout the season and Colin Evans provided a safe and reliable boat service under difficult circumstances. Thanks are also due to Emyr Owen and Mari Huws, BITL's Wardens, for their help during the year and for looking after Cristin when there were no Observatory staff on the island during the winter months.

The Annual Report was once again edited by Tony John and Emma Stansfield, Patrick Davies, Louis Driver and Kevin Clements assisted with layout and proof-reading.

BARDSEY BIRD AND FIELD OBSERVATORY**BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2020**

	<u>Note</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>	2019 <u>£</u>
<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>				
Debtors	1	18,563.11		17,618
Stock	2	1,045.82		1,071
National Savings Investment Account		4,178.05		4,148
Cash in Hand		-		144
Bank Balance				
High Interest Business Account		45,561.56		34,729
Bardsey Flora Account		10,729.61		10,721
PayPal Account		2,719.10		863
CAF Account		-		-
Current Account		45,538.20		42,598
		<u>128,335.45</u>		<u>111,893</u>
<u>LESS : CURRENT LIABILITIES</u>				
Creditors	3	<u>13,332.15</u>		12,844
<u>NET CURRENT ASSETS</u>			<u>115,003.30</u>	<u>99,049</u>
<u>NET ASSETS</u>			<u>115,003.30</u>	<u>99,049</u>
<u>REPRESENTED BY:</u>				
<u>ACCUMULATED FUND</u>				
Balance at 31st December 2019			31,642.57	29,124
Add Transfer for Heligoland Fund			-	33
Less Transfer to AW Fund			980.00	
Less Transfer to Solar Fund			837.20	1,318
Less Transfer to Reserve Fund			30,000.00	10,000
Excess of Income over Expenditure for the Year			<u>27,695.73</u>	<u>13,804</u>
Balance at 31st December 2020			<u>27,521.10</u>	<u>31,643</u>
<u>RESERVE ACCOUNT</u>			60,000.00	30,000
<u>AW ACCOUNT</u>			10,500.00	9,520
<u>BARDSEY FLORA FUND</u>			10,729.61	10,721
<u>SOLAR FUND</u>			-	10,913
<u>HELIGOLAND FUND</u>			1,421.67	1,422
<u>TONY CHARLES MEMORIAL FUND</u>			830.92	831
<u>BIRDS OF BARDSEY FUND</u>			4,000.00	4,000
			<u>115,003.30</u>	<u>99,049</u>

BARDSEY BIRD AND FIELD OBSERVATORY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2020

	<u>Note</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>2019</u> <u>£</u>
<u>INCOME</u>			
Subscriptions		4,988.00	3,560
Donations and Miscellaneous Receipts		35,539.73	3,715
Income Tax Recoverable		1,938.17	3,204
Contractual Contribution from NRW		15,729.00	18,443
Grant Income		16,800.00	
Sales		1,100.00	3,496
Visitor Fees		4,520.00	39,193
Bank Interest		32.27	55
National Savings Investment Account Interest		29.86	33
		<u>80,677.03</u>	<u>71,699</u>
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>			
Cristin - Rent Expenses		836.00	1,401
- Running Expenses		9,571.16	14,983
Improvements		-	500
Equipment		-	1,949
Bank Charges		49.25	21
Report		3,178.50	3,446
Sales Expenses		146.99	1,979
Salaries and National Insurance		31,795.92	29,654
Petty Cash and Sundries including Postage and Telephone		1,436.84	2,976
Professional Services		5,000.00	
Projects		-	-
Publicity		156.00	199
Insurance		810.64	788
		<u>52,981.30</u>	<u>57,895</u>
<u>EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR</u>		<u>27,695.73</u>	<u>13,804</u>

BARDSEY BIRD AND FIELD OBSERVATORY

NOTES TO THE BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2020

£

1. DEBTORS AND PAYMENTS IN ADVANCE

Donations	194.72
Sales	10.00
Income Tax Recoverable	1,920.39
Advertising in Annual Report	50.00
Contractual Contribution from NRW	16,388.00
	<u>18,563.11</u>

2. STOCK

Promotional Merchandise for Resale	1,045.82
	<u>1,045.82</u>

Stock is stated at the lower of cost or estimated net realisable value

3. CREDITORS

Visitor Fees Carried Forward	9,760.00
Cash Account	8.56
Running Expenses	2,071.20
Salaries	1,472.39
Sundries	20.00
	<u>13,332.15</u>

EXAMINER'S REPORT ON THE ACCOUNTS
OF
BARDSEY BIRD AND FIELD OBSERVATORY

I have examined the Balance Sheet at 31st December 2020 and the Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended on that date as shown on the attached pages 1 to 3 and certify that they are in accordance with the books and records of Bardsey Bird and Field Observatory.

J.S. Craig
30th June 2021

19 The Coppice
Mancetter
Atherstone
Warwickshire