Member of the Bird Observatories Council

Spurn bird observatory

SPURN BIRD OBSERVATORY TRUST LTD
Charity Registration No. 1141408

Annual Report 2025

This is the 15th annual report of the Spurn Bird Observatory Trust Ltd ('the bird observatory'), and covers 2025.

The bird observatory draws on a history of operation at Spurn since 1945 when it was the third such bird observatory in the UK and the first on the UK mainland. We acknowledge the inspiring, foundational work of two pioneering birders in the 1940s, our co-founders Ralph Chislett and George H. Ainsworth. The Trust registered as a charitable company with Companies House and as a charity with the Charities Commission in December 2010. The bird observatory is an accredited member of the Bird Observatories Council as it meets specified criteria relating to activities and facilities for the long-term monitoring of bird populations and migration.

The first annual report by Spurn bird observatory of its bird and natural history records was produced for 1964. Since 1992, we have produced an annual report 'Spurn Wildlife'. A full summary of our most recent records and activities can be found in our publication: '*Spurn Wildlife*'.

In order to share information more widely, all of our historical records from the 1940s onwards are stored at the East Yorkshire Archives at the Treasure House in Beverley. The catalogued information includes all the annual written bird logs and ringing and recovery data from 1945, together with notebooks, photographs and a range of typical administrative material. The focus is on birds, but there is also a wealth of additional material on butterflies and moths. The information is stored there under proper climatic care and security, to national standards. The catalogue is linked to the National Archives at Kew, London.

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 the encouragement of the breeding of wild birds, animals and insects in the Area of Benefit and its environs.*

The **Area of Benefit** is the area of the Spurn Peninsula, including Kilnsea and Easington, in the East Riding in the county of Yorkshire.

Structure, governance and management

The bird observatory is administered by a board of trustees (whom we term 'directors') who are volunteers and take no pay nor remuneration. They are assisted by a voluntary, co-opted management committee. The directors and management committee met four times during the year. The trust wishes to record thanks to the warden Paul Collins and observatory manager Rob Hunton for their work to ensure the smooth working of the bird observatory during the year, in pursuit of its charitable aims. A small bungalow owned by the Trust provides residential accommodation for staff.

Seasonal staff: The bird observatory acknowledges the important work of seasonal wardens in helping us with habitat management, birds and natural history recording, the Little Tern protection scheme, visitor liaison and the operation of the annual bird migration festival 'MigFest'.

Volunteers: On a daily basis, we are very grateful to our volunteers, including local people, visitors and residential volunteers. They all play an important role in the operation of the bird observatory. Volunteers contribute to our bird and wildlife recording, links with visitors and/or partner organisations, our social media accounts and newsletter, habitat and infrastructure management and our September bird migration festival 'MigFest'.

Review of the year

2025 was another successful year for the charity. In planning our work, the committee and directors kept in mind the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

How our activities deliver public benefit

1. Advancement of education

Main activity: Birders come to Spurn to witness bird migration, as well as to observe and sometimes ring scarce and rare birds. In support of this and scientific research, bird observatory staff and volunteers conduct a daily census of resident and migrating birds, an annual breeding bird survey and bird ringing. We recorded 253 species of birds, 28 butterfly species and 21 dragonfly species in 2025. The bird observatory ringed 5,039 birds of 80 species this year.

Bird records of note in 2025: Among the 253 bird species noted during the year, the main hghlights included the first-ever Black-faced Bunting for the area. Other standout rarities/scarcities included: the second Eastern Black Redstart; the fifth Melodious Warbler (a singing spring male); the sixth Isabelline Wheatear and Eastern Subalpine Warbler (an elusive male); a stunning male Kentish Plover; two Pallid Swifts (including a spring bird); up to five White-rumped Sandpipers (with three seen together at Beacon Ponds); three Hume's Warblers; five Pallas's Warblers; four Dusky Warblers; a Greenish Warbler; an Olive-backed Pipit; another excellent year for Bee-eaters; a record flock of seven Glossy Ibis (with several other sightings of single birds) and a flock of seven Lesser White-fronted Geese from a Scandinavian reintroduction scheme.

Using the guidelines of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) for the Breeding Bird Survey and Common Birds Census, we confirmed that a total of at least 60 bird species bred in the recording area in 2025. Due to our protection programme, 105 pairs of Little Tern bred this year, fledging 107 chicks, which was our best-ever year.

Sharing news on bird sightings: To enable public benefit, we actively share bird news via our registered two-way radio system, frequently update the bird observatory's social media feeds on BlueSky, Instagram and x, contribute to local WhatsApp groups, update an electronic sightings screen at the bird observatory hub, post a daily summary of bird sightings on our webpage and publish a seasonal summary by newsletter. This year we have reached additional members of the public through our increased use of Facebook.

Bird ringing: As part of our contribution to scientific research and to public engagement, bird ringing remains integral to the bird observatory's work. It is undertaken under the national scheme co-ordinated by the BTO, licensed under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Data this year on recoveries of ringed species added further to our knowledge of bird migration. For example, a Little Tern chick, ringed at Beacon Ponds in 2013, was recaptured in Senegal in April 2024. Then on 18 June 2025 it was photographed on Easington Beach. It has come back, 12 years after it was hatched — a remarkable return. A great indication that this site, and the work we do to protect it, really matters.

The observatory continues to contribute to colour-ringing and tagging projects. Twite were ringed with unique combinations of colour rings for The Twite Network. Work continued with the Humber Wader Study Group to colour-ring Redshank, Bar-tailed Godwit and Curlew. The observatory also contributed to projects of colour-ringing Short-eared Owls and Yellow-browed Warbler. The study of breeding Little Terns included pulli fitted with a uniquely coded larger plastic ring (a darvic ring), along with the standard BTO ring.

Natural history recording: After birds, our second most important area of study is Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths). Three mercury vapour traps were operated by the observatory this year. Traps in Church Field and Kew Villa were in use from March to November, with one in the bird observatory garden run sporadically throughout the season.

In 2025, a record total of 28 species of butterfly were recorded. Highlights included the third to fifth records of Dark Green Fritillary, second White-letter Hairstreak and some lingering Purple Hairstreaks after only two previous records.

It was an excellent year for dragonflies at Spurn, with a total of 21 different species recorded throughout the year, the best year on record in regards to overall diversity. This richness was greatly helped by an incredible run of rare species, such as Lesser Emperor, Vagrant Emperor, Norfolk Hawker and a long overdue flurry of Red-veined Darter records, as well as a record-breaking day for Willow Emerald. The main highlight was our second and then third Keeled Skimmer records.

Publication of our records for public benefit: A detailed annual report setting out our records of birds and natural history and our year of charitable activities is currently in production.

Engagement with regular visitors: The interest in and support for our work was evident by the approximately 1,100 Friends of Spurn who engaged with our activities in different ways throughout the year. The annual Friends of Spurn barbecue in August was an important way for the bird observatory to engage with over 70 of its supporters.

Wider public engagement: The bird observatory again provided a programme of regular walks (led by staff and volunteers) for visitors during the spring and autumn. These events coincided with public bird ringing demonstrations when weather conditions were suitable. Once again, the walks were well attended and appreciated by beginners and experienced naturalists alike.

When attending the Global Bird Fair in Rutland in July 2025, we reached some of the 100s of international attendees to explain our work.

Through our weekend-long bird migration festival 'MigFest' hosted at Spurn in early September, the bird observatory engaged with approx. 450 people. Birders, friends and families came to watch birds, talk and learn together. The bird observatory organised bird watching opportunities, inspiring seminars and lectures, guided walks and bird ringing demonstrations. The main events were fantastic talks by renowned ornithologist Richard Crossley and acclaimed conservationist, naturalist, and author Nick Acheson. Visitors also had opportunities to purchase books, magazines and artwork from visiting stall holders. We are very grateful to the owners of Sandy Beaches caravan park for providing an excellent venue for this event.

Youth engagement: At MigFest, we again conducted our annual Martin Garner Spurn Young Birder of the Year competition in partnership with the BTO. This national competition enables the bird observatory to encourage, support and recognise the emerging talents of young birders. All youth participants were presented with an award to recognise their achievement, along with membership packages, such as from sponsors Rare Bird Alert, British Birds and the Oriental Bird Club. Senior and Junior winners received optics from Swarovski and Opticron, respectively.

A 'Capture a Moment' competition, also at MigFest, invited young birders to submit what they considered captured the feel of the bird migration festival for them, through photography, art or poetry. The competition increased the opportunities for young people with varying interests and birding skills to engage with the bird observatory and visitors. The prize was a pair of ZEISS binoculars.

International engagement: The international links between Spurn Bird Observatory, Cape May Bird Observatory in New Jersey, USA, Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario, Canada and Falsterbo Bird Observatory in Skåne, Sweden to learn from updates on each other's work continued remotely in 2025.

Contribution to science and research: The bird observatory science and research sub-committee continued its work to enhance standardised counts undertaken in the recording area through seawatching, wildfowl counts and visual migration watches. The sub-committee continued to advise on arrangements and projects for bird ringing. The work on bird ringing enables the bird observatory to contribute to important research, such as on avian flu and ticks in birds.

The bird observatory continues to participate in an international research network that uses coordinated automated radio telemetry to facilitate research and education

on the ecology and conservation of migratory birds. We continue to operate a Motus receiver at Spurn. Using the Motus receiver, it is possible to get 'hits' (records) of birds with tags in the area, tagged elsewhere. 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. Additionally, an ATLAS tower (which uses a similar system to Motus) was installed to assist with a tagging project on Red Knot on the Waddensea.

Enabling access to the area for the public: The bird observatory operates self-catering residential accommodation in a converted four-bedroom property in the village of Kilnsea. The premises can accommodate up to 13 visitors, available at a modest charge to any visiting naturalist or other individual who is prepared to support the aims of the Trust. Grants are made available to researchers, academic or otherwise, to apply for funding from the bird observatory to support research costs as well as travel, accommodation and food related to their visit.

The observatory owns a certificated caravan site, sited next door to the warden's premises. This provides pitches for up to five touring caravans. The pitches are available for rent to anyone who wishes to experience and enjoy the local area. Four permanent caravan pitches are available for long-term let at the rear of the bird observatory building. A further five pitches for long-term let by volunteers are located on our land at Sykes Field.

Building partnerships: We acknowledge the contributions of many sponsors and supporters of the bird observatory in 2025. These include: British Birds journal, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Opticron, Oriental Bird Club, Rare Bird Alert, Swarovski Optic, Sheffield Bird Study Group, The John Lewis Foundation, The Phil Ridsdale Young Birder's Memorial Bursary, WildWings/Limosa, Yorkshire Coast Nature and ZEISS. The support of these organisations has, for example, enabled the charity to increase its engagement with young people to support and develop their interest in birds and natural history this year.

The bird observatory leads 'The Easington Little Tern Protection Scheme'. It does so through partnership with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Environment Agency, Natural England, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) and South Holderness Countryside Society and the committed work of local volunteers.

2. Conservation of wildlife

Recording bird population and migration information: All bird records are provided to the BTO and the YWT as well as being made available to any bona fide researcher. The daily bird log continues to be enhanced by our systematic point counts along Spurn Point and the Triangle area and standardised Visible Migration watches. In addition, we benefit from 'ad-hoc' notes submitted by local birders and visitors. The bird observatory inputs this information into an excel spreadsheet and feed into the BTO-led BirdTrack database and Trektellen. The bird observatory considers it is essential to contribute to the circa 2.2 million records entered into these national and international databases each year. These data helps with international efforts to monitor bird populations, trends and distribution. The bird observatory provides its records for county-level analysis as part of published bird reports by the Yorkshire Naturalists Union and has done so since 1945.

Recording wildlife: The daily log records not only birds, but butterflies, odonata, cetaceans, mammals, amphibians and reptiles. Additionally, long-term moth monitoring is also undertaken daily through the year through moth trapping.

Protecting rare breeding birds: The Easington Little Tern Protection Scheme at Beacon Ponds was managed by the Trust for the 25th consecutive year. A warden was employed thanks to external funding and they were assisted by several volunteers in order to give round-the-clock protection for this vulnerable species. In total 2,074 hours were dedicated to warden the breeding colony. The bird observatory is grateful to Richard Boon for coordinating this work.

Documenting rare and scarce migrant birds: Records of national rare bird species in 2025 were passed to the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) for review. Records of scare local bird species were shared with the Yorkshire Naturalist's Union (YNU) records committee for review.

Contributing to national databases: Our bird ringing data is passed to the BTO and contributes towards the conservation policies of bodies such as Natural England. The bird observatory also records important field sightings of birds that have been ringed elsewhere. This adds to species conservation.

Monthly counts of birds using the Humber estuary were carried out under the auspices of the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), a national initiative supported by the major conservation and research bodies in the United Kingdom: the BTO, Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, RSPB and Natural England.

Developing local wildlife habitat: The management of our land at Church Field, Corner Field, Sykes Field and our two hay meadows known as Schippers Field continued. We have enhanced this land further for breeding and migrant birds, bees, flora, insects, dragonflies, moths and butterflies.

The wardens and volunteers continue to liaise with the other landowners as Spurn, in particular the Sandy Beaches caravan park, Westmere Farm and the YWT in pursuit of our aims and objectives. We are grateful to all of these organisations for access to their land.

Directors
Rob Adams BEM
Sarah Harris (chair)
Pete Short

Management Committee
Mark Andrews (from February 2025)
Marcus Brew
Paul Collins (warden)
Georgia French
Rob Hunton (observatory manager)
Kieran Lawrence
Ollie Metcalf
Graham Speight
Tim Vaughan (secretary)
Nick Whitehouse (until November 2025)

Science and research sub-committee
Marcus Brew
Richard Boon
Paul Collins (warden)
Sarah Harris (chair of bird observatory)
Rob Hunton (observatory manager)
Tim Jones
Kieran Lawrence
Ollie Metcalf
Daniel Wade

Staff
Observatory Warden: Paul Collins
Observatory Manager: Rob Hunton
Seasonal assistant warden in 2025: Harry Appleyard
Seasonal Little Tern wardens in 2025: Charlotte Conner, Tate Lloyd, Alex Mann

Ambassador
Vacant

Publications
Jones, T. (ed)(in prep) Spurn Wildlife 2025
Roadhouse A (2006) 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

The directors declare that they have approved the Trust's report above at the Annual General Meeting of 1 August 2026.

Signed on behalf of the charity,

Tim Vaughan
Secretary

Registration number: 07474287

Spurn Bird Observatory Trust Limited

(A company limited by guarantee)

Annual Report and Unaudited Financial Statements

for the Year Ended 31 December 2025

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 2025, which are set out on pages 4 to 13.

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 2011Act; 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

01 August 2026

Spurn Bird Observatory Trust Limited
(Registration number: 07474287)
Balance Sheet at 31 December 2025

	2025 £	2024 £
Fixed assets		
Tangible fixed assets	580,559	580,559
Other financial assets	6,203	6,203
	586,762	586,762
Current assets		
Debtors	3,700	1,200
Cash at bank and in hand	63,624	76,727
	67,324	77,927
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(37,717)	(38,554)
Net current assets	29,607	39,373
Total assets less current liabilities	616,369	626,135
Creditors: Amounts falling due after more than one year	(76,697)	(89,020)
Net assets	539,672	537,115
Capital and reserves		
Other reserves	-	15,000
Profit and loss account	539,672	522,115
Total equity	539,672	537,115

Spurn Bird Observatory Trust Limited
Profit and Loss Account
For the Year Ended 31 December 2025

	2025		2024	
	£	£	£	£
Turnover (analysed below)		210,216		172,396
Cost of sales - Spurn shop		(5,134)		(3,888)
Gross profit		205,082		168,508
Gross profit (%)		97.56%		97.74%
Administrative expenses				
Employment costs (analysed below)	(98,001)		(90,087)	
Establishment costs (analysed below)	(45,313)		(22,060)	
Administrative expenses (analysed below)	(39,119)		(36,366)	
Finance charges	(128)		(187)	
		(182,561)		(148,700)
Income from fixed assets investments (CAF)		-		-
Bank interest receivable		716		491
Loan interest		(5,680)		(6,819)
Profit before taxation		17,557		13,480

Spurn Bird Observatory Trust Limited
Profit and Loss Account
For the Year Ended 31 December 2025

	2025	2024
Turnover	£	£
Caravan pitches	23,712	18,197
Accommodation fees	27,363	25,515
Donations received	68,803	50,682
Friends of Spurn subscriptions	28,422	27,655
Migration festival	28,693	25,920
Radio donation and rent	1,560	1,932
Tax refunds	14,718	8,868
Spurn science income	3,173	276
Spurn shop income, reports/books	5,093	7,024
Rent from Warden	5,125	4,000
Other income	3,554	2,327
	210,216	172,396
Employment costs		
Wages and salaries	96,952	88,985
Staff training	1,049	1,102
	98,001	90,087
Establishment costs		
Rates	2,519	1,703
Light,heat and power	10,551	7,661
Insurance	1,498	1,348
Repairs and maintenance	692	1,266
Site maintenance	30,053	10,082
	45,313	22,060
Administrative expenses		
Telephone and fax	809	877
Domestic supplies and services	365	239
Guided walks and events	11,507	11,231
Fundraising expenses BBQ	228	295
Rings and ringing equipment	4,358	1,197
Printing, postage and stationery	16,084	17,235
Trade subscriptions	914	263
Sundry expenses	4,010	4,842
Motor expenses	4	187
Legal and professional fees	840	-
	39,119	36,366