devonbirds

WATCH... ENJOY... PROTECT

Annual Report & Accounts

Year Ending

31 December 2025

VICE CHAIR ANNUAL REPORT JANUARY – JULY 2025

The details of the activities of Council are all on the website, accessible to all members, so this is just a brief summary.

The biggest item was the signing of the agreement for the Devon Wildlife Trust to manage all of Devon Birds' reserves. As was well-flagged up in previous reports and newsletters, it had become increasingly clear that DBs had neither the skills nor the resources to ensure the safety of volunteers, a legal requirement that has major implications should things go wrong, nor indeed the in-ecological knowledge to properly make these fit for purpose. None of this is to denigrate the tireless work done by many volunteers, both recently and over decades, which Council much appreciates, but we need to be able to step up to increasing demands of nature restoration and climate change resilience in the mid-21st century. We are delighted that DWT has welcomed the continual work of the DB volunteers – more always welcome!

A couple of the smaller reserves, which had little conservation impact on their own, were also handed over to other organisations, who could incorporate them as part of their larger land-holdings.

At the same time, DB's various hides across the County were also reviewed, and two were handed over to the land-owners, the SW Water Lakes Trust.

The Swift Boxes in Churches project is the subject of a separate report, but has been very well-supported financially by DBs, and is, even at this early stage, producing some significant gains for this much-loved – and much-declining – bird. It has also had a large local impact in many of the communities involved, with a great deal of enthusiasm generated across all ages.

This is only a report for the first 7 months of the year, as at that point my eyesight had degenerated such that any night-driving, and thus Council attendance, had become impossible.

Colin Randall

SECRETARY ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Council held four meetings during the year, all face to face. Though we have changed venue for the latest two meetings and now use the Kenn Centre, which is cheaper, in order to save money.

Our Exec now has three members, who are the secretary, Treasurer and Editor of the Report. Correspondence has been managed via email in the main, though we use Goggle where necessary.

It was a shame that Colin needed to step down and his engagement will be missed. Since his departure, Devon Birds has agreed to support the BTO and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker Group in undertaking surveys using sound recorders to locate birds. We are purchasing four sets of kits which will be distributed and used around the county to undertake these surveys.

The Lundy Trip last year was a great success and fully sold out. The feedback was that is was a great experience for all who sailed with us. We are organising a trip again this year and tickets are selling well with over one hundred sold to date.

We are still running the society with less trustees and council members than we need and this has meant that things take longer or are put to one side, due to resource constraints.

As you can see form the Agenda we have two new Council members in Alex Parsons and Peter Exley, as well as welcoming back Kevin Rylands as County Recorder. Hopefully we can encourage more members to become active, but this is proving to be a challenge.

This has been my first year as secretary and has been a bit of a challenge, having no chair, or (more latterly) vice chair to call upon. However the support from Council and my predecessor Mike Daniels has meant that the ship stills sails, even if it is a bit more wobbly and slow than it used to be.

Tony Utting

GODBOROUGH RESERVE ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Thirty five years ago, work began at Godborough. Twenty five years later the initial enthusiasm had worn off and the site was deteriorating. Ten years ago, after two years of renewed efforts, a local plan was drawn to reinvigorate the site. It is worth revisiting that plan and report on the four key objectives, namely:-

1. Increased use of the site by opening up and keeping open a network of paths around the site.
2. Further improvement to the range and condition of the habitats on the site.
3. Encouragement of new species but only birds were mentioned.
4. Begin formal recording of flora and fauna on the site.

Objective 1. In 2014 when there was no path through the bottom of Turner's Wood, one had to scramble down by the quarry from the top into a no-go area swamped by gorse and bramble. The new plantations were mostly overgrown, with few entrance gates and full of tree guards requiring removal. There is now a comprehensive system of paths throughout the site approaching 3 km. and the site is regularly visited.

Objective 2. Godborough offered the opportunity to develop a wide range of habitats and not the standard plant trees everywhere approach. A conscious effort has been made to clear, develop, manage and protect

a. Long grass habitat around the ponds, in woodland clearings and on the edges
b. Short grazed grassland
c. Wildflower areas, especially Finch Field, and wildflower woodland margins
d. Damp areas of rushy ground and ponds/scrapes
e. Coppiced woodland
f. Fruit bearing trees and shrubs
g. Big hedges and bramble patches within the woodland areas and by the ponds
h. Large mature trees
i. Areas of low disturbance for deer, badgers, foxes and other mammals

We have achieved this range of habitats, but we need to keep a balance. For example, we are in danger of producing a large area of single age, closed canopy woodland and that is an immediate challenge.

Objective 3. There were plenty of birds on site but no snipe, meadow, pipit, yellowhammer or skylark. We have failed to attract yellowhammer and skylark but the others are winter visitors. We now have a good range of birds including regular kingfishers, herons and wintering woodcock, together with over-wintering blackcaps, but overall bird numbers have been affected by the negative national trends. On a positive front odonata numbers have increased dramatically as the areas around the ponds has been manged more sensitively and the list has grown to 19 species. Butterfly numbers are also strong and it is now a range of species not just the marbled whites. A wider range of wildflowers have been encouraged through plug planting and seeding. There is also an amazing array of fungi across the site.

Objective 4. Recording has now become part of the culture amongst the volunteers and we are lucky to have a wide range of expertise and modern digital tools which means most things can be identified from an obscure fungus to the cinnamon sedge caddis fly found last week. Regular recording takes place for birds, flowers, trees, bees, butterflies and odonata which means we can measure what we are trying to manage. John Short has a flower record going back a decade.

Ten years ago, we knew that the site had an archaeological listing but no thought had been given to the implications. Five years ago it was on the national at-risk register. Following a visit by Cressida Whitton of DCC, prompted by a Devon wide LIDAR survey, it was agreed that the so-called cross dyke ridge would be cleared and the site has been removed from the at-risk register. The cleared dyke looked very promising and funding was found to carry out a major geophysical

survey of the Castle area and Furze Break. The results point to a significant pre-Roman hillfort and have confirmed the importance of the site.

Implicit in the original plan was the need for a group of volunteers. Nothing can be done without people to do the work. Initially it was a small group with a major input from Bideford College. Unfortunately, this input was discontinued after three years. The group has since grown and there are double figures on site every Tuesday and others within the week. I am pleased to say that three of us have lasted out the whole decade and I must express my appreciation to Phil and Maurice, neither of whom are birdwatchers, for their support over the years. The three of us appreciate the expertise, enthusiasm, photographic skills and archaeological knowledge that the new generation have brought to the site which has ensured it's continued development. A site like Godborough needs a constant inflow of new volunteers and new ideas. I feel privileged to have worked with so many wonderful and knowledgeable people over the last decade.

I'll end with a few photographs from 2025 to illustrate some of the on-going activity on the site.







Here's to 2035 and another ten years progress.

Philip Marlow

BRADIFORD RESERVE ANNUAL REPORT 2025

North Devon's Bradiford Reserve continues to benefit birds with low visitor impact, a light maintenance touch and the use of limited mixed stock grazing to control vegetation. It provides a freshwater oasis for waders, ducks and gulls to rest, drink and maintain their plumage. Herons, Egrets and waders use the

reserve to feed. Reed and Sedge Warblers, as well as Reed Buntings are established breeding species on the site. New Species such as Cattle Egret, Cetti's Warbler and Great White Egret, as well as Mediterranean Gull have been attracted to the Reserve this year.

Activities 2025

Spring grazing by sheep reduced the sward further after grazing by bullocks the previous autumn.
Some work was carried out to reduce bramble and blackthorn encroachment. Some volunteer sessions were led to try and keep on top of the annual Himalayan Balsam problem. An inspection was made of the land further north of the Reserve at Bradiford Water where there are acres of unmanaged balsam. The low level of balsam on the reserve is testament to the volunteer efforts in keeping it under control.

It has been an excellent year for the reed bed on the reserve which is finally starting to expand which will further benefit breeding species.



Some 30 bullocks were put on the reserve in September, after ragwort was removed from site.

We are very pleased to confirm that James Bracher is now appointed Reserve Manager, taking over from Tim in the New Year.

Thistle control on the spit to the west of the scrape/lagoon was implemented to provide a safer roosting area and reduce predator cover.
Before and after images below.



A check was made on the integrity of the sluice gates by way of salinity checks at high tide. It was found that the water immediately on the reserve side of the Tarka Trail was virtually sea water (3.5%), but under conditions of low fresh water river flow. The bird scrape remained fresh with very low salinity (0.5% or below) Above the scrape entrance the water was at zero salinity. Under conditions of fresh water flooding due to heavy rainfall, the scrapes salinity should fall even lower. Some maintenance of the sluice gates has recently been carried out by the EA, new bolts having been installed to strengthen one side. This is good news for birds needing fresh drinking water and a place to clean their feathers.
In the Autumn, Steve Threlkeld from DWT gave some welcomed assistance with heavy duty brush cutting. Towards the end of the year, two of our team attended Brush Cutting Courses which covered safe operation and maintenance. Two electric brush cutters were procured for the Reserve, which will help us keep invasive bramble, blackthorn and excess predator cover under better control. One team member attended a first aid course.

Bird Records 2025

Autumn and Wintering species include Herring, Black Headed and Greater Black Backed Gulls, with a first Med Gull visiting in the spring. An amazing 11 Cattle Egret turned up on the edge of the scrape towards the end of Summer! A pair of Kingfishers regularly dart over the reserve. Black-tailed Godwit, Lapwing, Redshank, Snipe, Green and Common Sandpiper, Oystercatcher, Teal, Mallard, Wigeon, Shelduck and Mute Swan are regulars. Immediately over the bank on the Taw side saw several Curlew Sandpiper this autumn. A Barn Owl was seen on the reserve in September. Peregrine, Sparrowhawk and Kestrel were recorded over the year. Reed and Sedge warblers, as well as Reed Bunting and Stonechat are breeding. Meadow Pipits and Skylark are over wintering. Swallows and Martins regularly use the scrape to drink and feed on migration.

Work Plan 2026

Spring and Autumn grazing with sheep and cattle respectively in cooperation with the farmer, Elon Westaway. As ever water levels and ground conditions will determine exact timings.
We will continue to cut back invasive bramble, thistle, blackthorn and brush where it impacts livestock and roosting bird safety.
We will try to encourage further reed growth and keep Himalayan Balsam under control.
We will look at leaky dams to retain more water in ditches and flushes for over wintering waders such as snipe and provide other food sources such as amphibians for Egrets and Herons.
Two woodland clumps require Willow coppicing, the cut stems will provide material for our dams.
We would like to investigate any potential Rural Payment availability.
There will be a Devon Birds Walk on Bradiford Reserve on 21st April 2026.
We need a second First Aider (James Bracher) and another person to undergo brush cutter training.
Long term we should like to improve the spit to the west of the scrape to make it more of an island for safer roosting and, potentially, a safe ground nesting area.

Tim Smith

CONSERVATION OFFICER (SOUTH) ANNUAL REPORT 2025

South Milton Ley

On 1 April 2025, the Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) took responsibility for management control over South Milton Reserve. The Reserve remains in the ownership of Devon Birds. Day to day management remains the responsibility of the local volunteer team who now follow the protocols and practices of the DWT, as used in their reserves. The local team welcomed the involvement of DWT, particularly the knowledge and expertise they add to improve the conservation value of the Reserve.

Routine maintenance including grass cutting, hedge cutting and minor repairs continued using term contractors. This work requires a mini-tractor mounted flail to cut more than 4km of paths and tracks, as well as heavy duty stimmers, hedge trimmers and chainsaws to keep the boardwalk clear and maintain the hedges. A tree surgeon completed an inspection of the trees and subsequently made safe many elm and ash affected by Dutch elm and ash dieback.

The South Milton Sandbank has not been as high as in previous winters and has been breached more frequently. The lower part of the Reserve has not therefore

been flooded to the same extent, and access along the tracks around the Reserve has always been possible throughout 2025. More water is however flowing into lower parts of the Reserve as a result of the decision in 2021 to postpone desilting the north side main stream below the treatment plant. Over the last two years, silt deposition reached a state of natural equilibrium, with deposition in low flows being cleared in times of high flow. The section of the stream between the treatment plant and the boardwalk has overflowed into the reedbed and under the boardwalk over the last two winters, as shown in the photos below.

Raising the dam in south side ditch above the public footpath in late 2024 has also resulted in more water flowing into the upper part of the reedbed. Reed growth in 2025 was exceptional, the best in decades and is attributed to diverting more water into the reedbed.

Water levels and potential impacts on access around the Reserve will continue to be monitored to determine if and when desilting work might be required in 2026. Also, investigations will continue to develop a scheme to divert some water from the upper section of the main stream on the north side, to the ditch on the south side, and so further increase flows through the reedbed.





South West Water (SWW) publish online live data on overflows from the treatment plant (Waterfit Live website). Although these combined sewer overflows are permitted under their license, the frequency is considered excessive and duration unacceptable. SWW has now conceded that there are deficiencies in the sewer network leading to excessive overflows. They have however advised that the priority for the remedial work is low and there are no funds allocated for rectifying the faults in the current five-year programme of work. The work would however be included in the following five-year programme.

Alan Pomroy continued to lead the ringing and recording efforts at South Milton and his report is included below.

Ringing at South Milton Ley: 1242 birds of 35 species were trapped in 2025 during 31 ringing sessions throughout the year. Of these birds, 223 were wintering Chiffchaffs, with model estimates suggesting a total wintering population of 284 birds and confirming the Reserve's importance as one of the principal wintering sites for the species in the UK.

The 2016-2020 management plan identified a lack of biodiversity data for the reserve and, since then, considerable effort has been put identifying and documenting species. By the time of the 2022-2026 management plan 1,374 species had been recorded because of the efforts of over 33 specialist groups and individuals. This work continued in 2025 with lichens being investigated for the first time and twelve new species of fungi were also added to the reserve lists. Considerable effort was put into accessing and investigating various specialist, national databases, which proved highly productive and, together with ongoing fieldwork, has increased the biodiversity list for the Reserve by 379 species to a new total of 1,984.

South Huish Meadowlands

The National Trust (NT) continues to debate its conservation objectives for its land in the South Huish area, and Devon Birds' potential long-term involvement. The process has been delayed because of restructuring within the NT. As a result, Devon Birds' annual license for South Huish expired on 10 October 2025 without our future involvement being confirmed. Another annual license was offered and signed by Devon Birds. Devon Birds is in discussion with the NT to secure a new lease before the latest license expires.

Water levels within the scrapes have been managed throughout the year with the ditches, weirs and scrapes all operating as intended. Upper sections of the ditches are becoming overgrown and require clearing - at NTs expense as Devon Birds will not commit funds for this work while working under an annual license.

This reserve is probably the best watched of all Devon Bird reserves with the regular watchers supplemented by many of the estimated 130,000 visitors to South Milton Sands. Bird numbers and species have been down over previous years. A few rarities have, however, made up for the poor year overall, including a flock of 34 Greenland White-Fronted Geese and a Green Winged Teal, both recorded in December 2025.

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.

The ramp leading into the hide was replaced in April 2025 as the original had become unsafe. The roof was also replaced as it had begun to leak. Regularly grass cutting and hedge trimming kept the path to the hide clear.

Prawle Point Reserve

The reserve is watched and maintained by a small group of dedicated Devon Birds members but few others. The National Trust is due to sign a 99-year lease on this reserve; presumably the terms of the lease will be made known before long.

Pig Nose Valley Reserve

Nothing to report.

Nick Townsend

MID DEVON BRANCH ANNUAL REPORT 2025

No indoor meetings were held by the branch during 2025.

The branch held 19 walks over the year (20 were planned but one cancelled due to poor weather), with attendance of between 4 and 20 people, including a few new members. The year began with a walk from Powderham to Turf Lock in January, with thick fog initially obscuring views of any birds, but gradually clearing to reveal a good mix of 66 species. A visit to Molland Common in February found far fewer species, but an exciting battle over prey between a Red Kite and Raven and a sighting of a Merlin were all enjoyed. Visits to Yarner Wood, Meeth Quarry and Aylesbeare Common were all well attended to Meeth Quarry Reserve took place despite some strong winds and a few showers.

Ideford Common was a new venue for several members and in May held a good selection of spring migrants. Other visits in May included East Anstey Common on Exmoor and Challacombe Farm on Dartmoor. A very wet day in early June prompted a change of plans from walking across the open moor at Dunnabridge to a more sheltered walk through woodland near Venford Reservoir, with the highlight of watching young Pied Flycatchers fledging from one of the nestboxes. Mid June saw us in south Devon, at the Devon Birds reserves of South Huish and South Milton Ley, where we were kindly guided by the local warden. An evening

visit to Cookworthy Forest in July was well attended and rewarded with excellent sights of churring Nightjars. Events over late summer included Dunsdon Nature Reserve, Leigh Bridge Chawleigh, and Seaton Wetlands, where some close views of a variety of waders were appreciated. Dawlish Warren is always a popular venue, and a visit in September can throw up suprises. Highlights for our group were an Eider, Common Scoter and great close views of a Red-throated Diver. Later in the year visits to Fremington Quay (Glossy Ibis!), Fernworthy Reservoir and Postbridge were enjoyed and a branch Christmas lunch at the Ring of Bells, North Bovey.

Tom Misselbrook

EAST DEVON BRANCH ANNUAL REPORT 2025

We usually run 22 guided walks each year. Primarily throughout East Devon and Dartmoor, with some further afield such as Berry Head, Ham Wall and Steart . The walks are popular and are led by one of a small group of dedicated volunteer leaders. Typically the walks have participant numbers in the low teens, which we find is excellent for ensuring that everyone gets good views of the wildlife and can be helped where necessary.

The branch does not run indoor meetings, preferring to focus on our walks programme.

The branch committee is small but active and we are always looking for more members to join us in committee work, which is anything but arduous, again, primarily focussing on developing and running our walks programme.

Alex Parsons

PLYMOUTH BRANCH ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Plymouth Branch ran a successful programme of fourteen outdoor events and four evening meetings, which were held at Mutley Baptist Church in Plymouth. These were well supported by local members.

Reflecting on our Outdoor Activities, a total of 147 bird species were identified, which serves to illustrate the wide variety of habitats available in south Devon and east Cornwall.

Two new venues for the group, in 2025, were Wembury Point (June) and Exminster Marsh and the Powderham Church area (August).

The tidal River Axe and scrapes at Seaton Wetlands were the farthest east we ventured. To the west, Cornwall Birds' Reserve, Walmsley Sanctuary, and the River

Camel area near Wadebridge provided good opportunities for the group to look for wildfowl and waders.
Visits to other estuaries included the River Exe, namely Exminster Marshes and Bowling Green Marsh for early spring migrants and the Powderham area and Turf for a summer visit. The River Lynher and St John's Lake at Torpoint provided mudflats for feeding winter waders.
The coastal sites of Broadsands, Brixham and Slapton provided opportunities to see Grebes and Divers. Wembury and Soar were selected to encounter scrub / heathland species and migrants.
In total contrast, the valleys of Dartmoor around Venford Reservoir and Yarner echoed with birdsong from woodland species as did the farmland around Challacombe and Cadover. A visit was also made in the winter to Emsworthy DWT Reserve for migrants attracted to the many bushes laden with red berries.

Some birding highlights were:

- A Wryneck at Turf
- Four fledgling Treecreepers that must have emerged from their nest in a wall a couple of hours prior to our Challacombe visit
- The drama of being asked to evacuate Brixham breakwater by the police due to a canister labelled 'DANGER' having been washed up on the beach
- The return of migratory birds to our shores both in spring and autumn

All our activities are reported on the DB website. The species lists exclude any that are considered vulnerable in Devon by both DB and the BTO.

The lists of birds seen were sent to Birdtrack, the BTO recording website for bird sightings.

In January the talk at our first **Indoor Meeting** was given by **Dave Scott** titled 'Raptor Stories'. Dave is a passionate bird enthusiast as well as an artist, photographer and licensed bird ringer. He also runs a local small bird rehabilitation centre. He shared his experiences in helping in projects around the world and visiting grouse moors in Scotland.

Our second talk was by **Nick Townsend,** the South Devon Reserves Officer for our society. He described the considerable effort put into developing and maintaining the unique DB reserve of South Milton Ley, acquired in 1976. He also mentioned the adjacent marsh at South Huish, leased from the National Trust and managed as a wetland.

The third comprehensive talk covered 'The Weird and Wonderful Wildlife of the Westcountry' by **Charlie Elder,** an author, journalist and naturalist. He described a number of species special to the South West. Cirl Bunting and Greater Horseshoe

Bat, as well as Blue Ground Beetle and Bluefin Tuna were among those he chose to highlight.

The last presentation was 'Overwintering Birdlife on the River Exe' given by **Derek Carter**. Derek gives commentaries on the Stuart Line winter bird cruises on the Exe Estuary. He described the importance of the many habitats around the area for winter and summer species. His excellent photography complemented his talk.

Our AGM preceded the talk and Fay Charlesworth agreed to join the Branch Committee which is now comprised of 12 volunteers.

A new projector has been supplied by the DB Council as an upgrade, for use at our indoor meetings.

Several members have carried out annual surveys to monitor bird species. The BTO surveys include the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) and Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). Eight branch members took part in the 2025 BTO Heathland Survey and were successful in identifying evidence of breeding of Dartford Warblers in both survey locations covered. The BTO Winter Bird Survey is currently taking place with 4 visits from September 2025 to February 2026. Three members are taking part.

Plymouth Branch has donated £100 towards the project supported by DB to install Swift nest boxes and sound systems in church towers.

The Committee of Plymouth Branch wish to thank all members for their support and camaraderie this year.

Liz Harris

TAW & TORRIDGE BRANCH ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2025

During 2025 we conducted 12 guided walks in and around the area ranging from the Tamars to Horner Woods on Exmoor. This included two evening sessions for Nightjar. The walks continue to be well attended by members and some non-members, this giving as the opportunity to sing the praises of Devon Birds and the local branch system and do a bit of recruitment. Notable species included the aforementioned Nightjar, Tree Pipit, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Cuckoo, Whinchat, Glossy Ibis, Marsh Harrier and Great Northern Diver.

For a couple of years now the walk leading duties have been shared by a small team; given how successful this has proven to be we will continue doing this in the coming years.

We attempted to hold six indoor meetings, three either side of the summer break, during 2025. However named storms and speaker illness put pay to two of these. Topics ranged from the intricacies of bird ringing, the biodiversity agenda of the RHS and specifically how members from various branches are helping, to the importance of recording the wildlife in your garden via birding abroad including Japan and the Himalayas.

Despite our best efforts attendance at meetings continues to remain low and it is questionable if holding indoor meetings remains viable. This will be a discussion point at the branch AGM in March.

Members of the branch have continued to participate in a number of activities, volunteering at our two reserves Bradiford and Godborough, with the BTO via BBS, WeBS and other surveys, surveying at RHS Rosemoor and on Exmoor for ENP and the Exmoor Society (the latter in conjunction with members of SOS).

Ray Salter

SOUTH DEVON BRANCH ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Personnel

At the AGM in March 2025 the current Chair-Nick D'Agorne, Secretary-Jeff Hacon and Treasurer Roger Little agreed to continue in their roles for the following year.

Activities

Branch indoor meetings have continued to thrive over the period since the last report given in January 2025, with 6 meetings being held, covering a range of topics.

- In February 2025, Jerry Horn presented a talk entitled a Swift Rescue? Devon Swift Project attended by 44 people.
- In March 2025, the AGM was very well attended by 64 members and non-members who enjoyed the presentation by Emily Cuff of the Devon Wildlife Trust, entitled Woodpecking up the pieces: Landscape recovery in East Dartmoor.
- The Branch held its first indoor meeting of the Autumn/Winter season in September The presentation by Malcolm Burgess focused on the tracking of Pied Flycatchers on their migratory route to and from Africa. This was well-received by the 53 members and non-members that attended.
- In October an indoor presentation was held, led by Marije Zwager, the Engagement Ranger at Berry Head. The presentation was attended by 61 members and non-members.

- In November an indoor presentation was held, led by Nick and Sara D'Agorne, entitled Wildlife encounters in Costa Rica, with 52 members and non-members
- In January 2026, 52 members and non-members were spell-bound by the presentation by Fenella Davis, who told the story of her father, Guy Madoc, who was imprisoned in Changi Prison, where he wrote a detailed guide to the Birds of Malaya-the first of its kind.

Finance

The Branch has continued to support the main Society funds, with an excess of income over expenditure on all indoor meetings -see separate Treasurer's Report from Amanda Collick.

Nick D'Agorne

SWIFT BOXES IN CHURCHES PROJECT REPORT 2025

This project goes from strength to strength, with 24 installations totalling 976 nesting chambers inserted into churches this year. Each one is bespoke as mediaeval churches are all different sizes and shapes, so that every tower and its louvres have to be assessed for suitability, a proposal put to the Parochial Church Council, who, once agreed, have to ask the Diocese in the person of the relevant Archdeacon for permission. These buildings are all listed, usually at a high grade, so the fact that the Diocese has happily agreed in every case saves a great deal of bureaucracy.

The cabinets, often holding 6 to 20+ chambers each, then have to be constructed to precise measurements, and carried up narrow winding, often unlit staircases to a considerable height. In addition, any other louvres have to be made safe against squirrels, jackdaws etc. Then the acoustic lure is installed on a time switch, switched on and off seasonally by a local person (the "Swift Champion"), and, hopefully monitored as well. No wonder this whole project is expensive – the time and materials average out at £1600 per church.

All the evidence suggests that it can take 2 – 5 years before a single chamber in an installation is used, but it is clear that Swifts have prospected a good number of the churches; in particular, Exeter Cathedral had 5 boxes occupied in their first summer, with no hatching, but 2 discarded eggs – probably involving young birds not yet able to breed. We have great hopes for 2026 and onwards!

We are immensely grateful to various organisations and charitable trusts that have contributed to the costs: Devon Birds, who have contributed the lions' share so far; the Devon Environmental Foundation for another substantial grant in 2025,, plus a crowd-funding appeal they ran for us; the Swire Foundation;

Riverford Farms; the Dart Valley Trust; as well as many individuals and other organisations.

Above all, the project could not happen without the skills and tenacity of Jerry Horn, who does most of the work, both with PCC's and on the technical side. He was awarded the Wild About Devon Outstanding Individual Award in March; in a category with many worthy nominees, the judges were unanimous. May his work continue to give results for this rapidly declining species.

Colin Randall

Trustees' Annual Report for the period

	Period start date				Period end date		
	Day	Month	Year		Day	Month	Year
From	01	01	2025	To	31	12	2025

Section A Reference and administration details

Charity name	Devon Birds
Other names charity is known by	
Registered charity number (if any)	1191647
Charity's principal address	1 Colleton Crescent
	Exeter
	Devon
	Postcode EX2 4DG

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			
2	Miss A Collick	Treasurer		
3	Mr C Randall		Resigned 31 July 2025	
4	Mr A Utting	Secretary		
5	Ms F Freshney			
6	Mr M Daniels	Secretary	Resigned 31 March 2025	
7	Mrs E Harris			
8	Mr N D'Agorne			
9	Mr M Overy		Appointed 31 July 2025	
10				

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)

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.

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.

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.

Section D Achievements and performance

Summary of the main achievements of the charity during the year

Please see the reports from each area of the charity attached.

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 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. For 2025 this is approximately £20,000. The total unrestricted reserves at 31 December 2025 was £133,651, 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	T Utting
Full name(s)	Amanda Collick	Tony Utting
Position (eg Secretary, Chair, etc)	Treasurer	Secretary
Date	14/03/2026	

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of	Charity Name: Devon Birds		
On accounts for the year ended	31 December 2025	**Charity no (if any)**	1191647
Set out on pages	24-25 (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 / 2025.

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:	C	**Date:**	2/9/26
Name:	Catherine Williams FCA DChA		
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):	CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT		
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	No (if any)
Devon Birds	1191647

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date
	1 January 2025		31 December 2025

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	21,583	-	-	21,583	24,403
Donations, Patrons and Legacies	4,824	2,135	-	6,959	6,340
Sundry sales and events	7,370	-	-	7,370	11,519
Rural Payments Agency	6,341	-	-	6,341	-
Grant income	-	32,076	-	32,076	-
Other incoming resources	-	-	-	-	-
Investment income	7,012	-	-	7,012	3,938
	-	-	-	-	-
***Sub total** (Gross income for AR)*	47,130	34,211	-	81,341	46,200
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	47,130	34,211	-	81,341	46,200
A3 Payments					
Publications	9,694	-	-	9,694	10,787
Conservation expenses	17,369	34,250	-	51,619	58,843
Other costs	17,856	-	-	17,856	17,803
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	44,919	34,250	-	79,169	87,433
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	44,919	34,250	-	79,169	87,433
Net of receipts/(payments)	2,211	(39)	-	2,172	(41,233)
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	131,440	59,128	-	190,568	231,801
Cash funds this year end	133,651	59,089	-	192,740	190,568

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	2,721	-	-
	CAF Deposit account	42,377	59,089	-
	Virgin Instant Access	88,553	-	-
	Total cash funds	133,651	59,089	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	South Milton Ley	Unrestricted	55,890	-
	Prawle	Unrestricted	1,800	-
	Godborough	Unrestricted	45,984	-
	Bradiford	Unrestricted	17,000	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities	Devon Wildlife Trust	Unrestricted	15,600	11/02/2026
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
A Collick	Amanda Collick	14/03/2026
T Utting	Tony Utting	14/03/2026

Restricted funds

	Bradiford	South Milton	Swift and House Martin	Work on Dartmoor	Devon Bird Report	Devon Church Swifts	**Total**
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Balance b/f 01/01/2025	8,156.00	34,600.00	6,006.50	5,077.86	0.00	47,943.70	101,784.06
Receipts					250.00	33,961.00	34,211.00
Transferred							0.00
	8,156.00	**34,600.00**	**6,006.50**	**5,077.86**	**250.00**	**81,904.70**	**135,995.06**
Expenses			-404.70			-33,845.00	-34,249.70
Grants							0.00
Balance c/f 31/12/2025	**8,156.00**	**34,600.00**	**5,601.80**	**5,077.86**	**250.00**	**48,059.70**	**101,745.36**

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 installations.