

Lavell's Wetland Trust (LWT) AGM Newsletter 2019

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Welcome everyone to LWT's first ever AGM newsletter. Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of Lavell's Wetland Trust - L.W.T. is to be held Tuesday 18th June 2019 at 19:30, Earley St Peter's Church Hall, Church Road, Reading, RG6 1EY.

Agenda for A.G.M.

- 1) Apologies for absence
- 2) **Minutes** - Approval of minutes
- 3) **2018 Reports** :
 - a) Treasurer – Phil Kinch : Year ending 31st December 2018
 - b) Membership – Les Blundell
 - c) Ringing Report – Tim Alexander
 - d) Countryside Service – Simon Bartlam
 - e) Chairman – Fraser Cottingham
 - 2019 Birds so far
 - Annual updates, management, website, social media etc.
 - Cycle path threat
 - Network Rail Grant
 - The Vison Unfolds
 - The help we need
- 4) Election of Officers & Committee
 - a) Officers standing down/re-election
 - b) Appeal to fill new sub-committee posts – Social Media, Fund Raising/Stalls and Shops
- 5) AOB

Notes

1. ***The present trustees are all required to stand down, they can be re-elected;*** Chairman – Fraser Cottingham, Secretary – Jane Campbell, Treasurer – Phil Kinch, Renton Righelato, Les Blundell and Ron Bryant. Committee members are –Bob Bennett, Peter Scudamore and Kevin Burgess.
2. ***Nominations for new officers or committee should be sent by Wednesday 12th June to: The Secretary, Lavell's Wetland Trust c/o Dinton Pastures Country Park, Davis Street, Hurst, RG10 0TH OR simply email info@lavells.org.uk***
3. ***If subscriptions are in arrears, members are not entitled to vote at the AGM***
4. ***The AGM will be followed by tea/coffee, etc., then a talk by Colin Wilson – Saving Our Amazing Swifts***

2018 Reports

i. Treasurer, Phil Kinch

LWT was formed in 2018 as the successor charity to Friends of Lavell's Lake (FOLL – Charity no. 297074). At an Extraordinary General Meeting held on 17th July 2018, the members of FOLL agreed to the transfer all assets, liabilities, memberships and ongoing obligations to LWT.

Their decision has been implemented and cash assets totalling £30,303.00 as at 1st August 2018 have been transferred to LWT. As at 31st December 2018, LWT had cash assets totalling £29,638.91.

The Receipts and Payments Account has further analysis and is included separately together with the report of the independent examination that has been undertaken.

Any sums received by FOLL are reconciled and forwarded to LWT regularly.

LWT is a small charity and cannot generate significant revenues quickly to address major costs as and when they occur, or to replace funds that have been spent. Therefore the trustees agreed a policy to retain c. £9,000 as a reserve fund as recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 18th September 2018.

At 30th April 2019 points to note are:

- Annual subscriptions are slightly down on the same period last year & donations are slightly up. The total is similar.
- £2,100 is in the budget for obtaining various permissions for the Network Rail project. These include £170 to obtain an EA permit as well as £462 for WBC planning permission and ~£1700

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for costs to prepare the application. LWT has taken the decision to apply for EA and WBC planning consents, accepting the financial risk on the basis we have to do our best to improve the site in the best interests of wildlife and improving the enjoyment of our members and the public.

- £700 for owl box(es) was raised by donations given to a supporter's sponsored walk.
- The LWT Gift Aid claim for 2018 is ready to for submission and we expect to receive c. £250, making a total of c. £830 for the year.
- Our Virgin Money Giving account is now "live".

Thanks to Delia Allott for undertaking the independent examination of the 2018 accounts.

ii. Membership, Les Blundell

Growth of membership again above with previous years, now 425 memberships, versus 380 in 2017. Families represent about 25% of the total, around 55% are individuals. With efforts on fund raising and promoting ourselves at stores, events and fetes we should be able to grow our numbers to over 500.

Membership Report: May 2019 (Mar 2019)

Life Members: 51 (51)

Life Family: 19 (19)

Honorary Life: 1 (1)

Individual: 230 (225)

Family: 121 (119)

Total 427 (422) Change since March : + 5 Change since May 2018: + 36

iii. 2018 Bird Ringing, Tim Alexander

Ringing started at Lavell's in September 1986 when Gill Butler was site manager for Wokingham District Council. The purpose of the project was always to study the song bird population at the rear of Teal scrape and to see whether changes in habitat had an effect on the bird numbers. Since this time the area has grown from low and thinned out scrub vegetation around the lakes edge into a dense copse comprising of trees like willow, sloe and hawthorn. In places this is now very dense and quite tall. The scrub habitat of occasional bramble and young hawthorn has largely been replaced. The scrape itself has seen an increase in the size of the reed bed.

The last couple of years has since a decrease in the number of common warblers ringed before the end of May. This presumably means there are fewer breeding warblers around the site. Although this needs to be seen against the national picture of declining song birds some of these figures are interesting;

Species	2004	2008	2010	2011	2018	2019
Sedge Warbler	6	10	26	8	3	0
Willow Warbler	2	0	5	7	0	0
Whitethroat	5	2	5	2	0	1
Garden Warbler	5	2	12	5	2	3
Blackcap	9	12	25	25	5	12
Reed Warbler	3	2	12	11	7	8

I have tried to pick the years where the number of visits made is comparable. These figures only relate to the small area at the rear of the Teal scrape. It does suggest that the best years for these warblers was 2010 to 2011. So far this year though both a single Reed Warbler and Blackcap have returned to the site having been ringed at Lavell's in 2018.

Winter ringing has shown that the Teal scrape reed bed is used as a roost for Reed Buntings. On 6 visits from November to March 20 Reed Bunting's were ringed and none were ever retrapped. This may be a coincidence but it may also suggest that the birds are moving through the site during the winter months. The rear of Lavell's is also used as a small roost by winter thrushes. This winter saw no Lesser Redpoll's ringed – for the second year in a row, maybe due to silver birch trees being cut down on the Woodley side

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of the River Loddon. This year the two male Cetti's Warbler are back from 2018. Let's hope that they are more successful in breeding than last year when the drought dried out the scrape and I saw no evidence that any young had been successfully reared.

iv. Countryside Service Ranger Report 2018

Management Tasks

- Hay/Grass cutting Teal & Tern Meadows and after grazing of meadows
- Ride Management at the back of Lavell's and main island
- Reed cutting to create open rides
- Tree removal at the back of Lavell's (part of the TW project)

General Ranging

- General work including cutting back path vegetation, and clearing fly-tipping
- Clearance of Lavell's car park after antisocial activities on a weekly basis
- Hide clearing/painting and security. Bittern hide has unfortunately been subjected to repeated and substantial vandalism this year. The service has tried to do same day repairs of damage to minimise disruption to users but it has been a time consuming exercise
- The installation of a gate in late November to the Lavell's overflow car park has helped secure the site from antisocial behaviour and the immediate decrease in antisocial behaviour (parties, fly tipping, fires, vandalism and rubbish) is notable
- Boundary/site inspection & Make safe dangerous trees
- Liaising with Southern Electric regards programmed and reactive maintenance on power lines

Volunteer involvement

Other than the friends of Lavell's group, a variety of School + college work experience, Community Services, Probation services, Adult Training Groups have been involved in the site management.

Finally I would like to say a big thank you to all of the members of FOLL for all the hard work you put into the site. The Thames Water Project (from theory to application to installation) was a huge credit to you all and something you should be incredibly proud of. As usual too, the vigilance and wildlife recording from all of the members help make the site a very special place that is appreciated by visitors and wildlife alike, thank you all.

v. Overview of 2019 so far: Chairman, Fraser Cottingham

Thanks – If it were not for the relentless commitment and efforts of our committee and the huge support from our volunteers, LWT would be lost and the habitats a mess, I thank all of you from the bottom of my heart. And thanks to all our members, your visits make the area popular, your subscriptions keep us afloat.

There is so much pressure to do more with less and yet so much is reliant on all the staff at Dinton Pastures Countryside Service and we are indebted to our long time friend, Simon Bartlam who helps us at all hours and always with a happy willing smile, although many of us never see you, we also thank the office staff. Summerlease Ltd remains core to all we do and are grateful for their efforts in forging such solid relationships with stakeholders and likewise thanks to Ken Swan who is on site so frequently and ready to help us when required. Thanks to Tim Alexander for his ringing, Bob Bennett for keeping the latest bird news and photographs up to date, the bird walk leaders, litter pickers, hide painters and anyone we have forgotten.

Overview of the birds of 2019 so far – Visit <http://lavells.org.uk/which> is up to date but the <https://www.facebook.com/foll.org.uk> does need a new url/link and I'm getting on the case

With 2018 being so mind blowing, I never expected that 2019 would show raise the bar even further, it has already been very exciting. Please forgive the glut of my record shots I didn't have time to ask everyone for theirs.

January – 1st offered much of the birds we have come to expect : Bittern, Barn & Tawny Owls, Golden Plover and Red Crested Pochard being best on the day. Woodcock followed 2nd, then **2 Great White Egret** showed up going to roost 6th and were found to be flying over each morning thereafter, on and off until April. Brambling and a much rarer **Crossbill** (Jo Taylor) were seen over and early Oystercatcher.

February – 16th was the first big rarity, a male **Red-breasted Merganser** with a female Goosander (FJC) on Lea Farm Lake (LFL) but left quickly. Luckily they returned, again with the female and a male on one occasion, it went on to roost each night until 2nd March.

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March – Our earliest Sand Martin ever showed up 2nd March (PSc), 20th a **Little Gull** was found at LFL (Jo Taylor et al), 21st a **Red-legged Partridge** was seen along the river (GSE), 23rd a female **Common Scoter** (Suren Akkaraju) appeared LFL (BTB et al), as did the first Wheatear (GSE et al)

April – All quiet until 5th then a pair of **Med Gulls**, dropped in LFL staying 2 days, the 9th will be remembered for quite a long time, with a major fall of migrants : **2 Wheatear, 2 male Yellow Wagtail, 3 White Wagtail, Scandinavian Rock Pipit, Curlew, Whimbrel** and Sedge Warbler all on the same day. 11th a **Tree Pipit** flew over low near Bittern Hide (FJC & JMcG), another Wheatear 12th.



Med Gull – Geoff Emmett



Little Gull – Andy Tomz



Yellow Wagtail – Geoff Emmett



Curlew –

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Whimbrel - J Morton Jones



Wheatear – Geoff Emmett

Then a mega 13th, an **Avocet** found on the bund at Tern scrape staying until late afternoon. The finders were a couple visiting from Moor Green. 21st an early **Whinchat** LFL (FJC et al), 25th another **Curlew**, 26th another **Whimbrel** which amazingly stayed for 3 days, roosting on the shingle island. And then 28th another mega, an adult **Kittiwake** on BSL (FJC et al), stayed for about 2 hours, was joined by another **Little Gull**, which stayed on most of the day. Then 30th a male **Garganey** on Sandford (Jo Taylor et al) stayed 8 days, acting very territorial and chasing other species away from around the reed bed near the hide.



Avocet 13th April – FJC



Kittiwake 28th April – FJC



Garganey 30th March – FJC



Common Scoter – Marek Walford

May – 1st another mega - a **Wood Warbler** opposite Lavell's car park (FJC et al), singing it's heart out all day, moving to a large Oak overlooking the old gold course until 15:15. 8th brought more excitement, a **Black Tern** LFL (JMcG & FJC), also seen briefly at BSL (BTB), 12th another **Whinchat** LFL (RJS), 14th **Greenshank** heard only

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Nightingale (LB et al), and numerous sightings of Hobby and late Common Sandpiper. The last surprise of the May has been **Spotted Flycatcher 20th**, and same day a pair of **White Stork** flew over low South (Suren Akkaraju).



Wood Warbler 1st May – FJC



Black Tern 17th May – FJC

Monthly Species Counts

88 in Jan, New 2nd place, beating 2011 by 1
87 in Feb = 6th
90 in March, way down 3 above 2004
111 in April = 2nd with 2003
94 in May, New 3rd place, beating 2011 & 8 by 1

Monthly Running Year Totals

95, New 2nd place, beating 2005 by 1
103 = 3rd with 2011
125 = 3rd place with 2016
134, New 1st place, beating 2012 & 17 by 2

Habitat Management, Work Parties & Events - Achievements

- Both Tern rafts was serviced in 2019, all Black-headed Gulls on one, the other has just gone out
- We have begun stock proof fencing Sandford's South side, DP have begun the rest of Middle Marsh
- Peter Scudamore continues with CROW with hedge laying along the LFGP section of the Loddon.
- Lea Farm Lake (LFL), part of the East shore has been strimmed, we await the right time to spray the Crassula, most likely mid August
- Again over 30 pairs of Sand Martins are in occupation of the LFL wall

Management Plans

- Further work is required on how to manage the cutting of our now significant Phragmites reed beds.
- Cattle grazing is being looked at to manage Willow scrub at LFL
- Islands on Sandford are to be cleared in February before waders and ducks get settled in
- The landfill observation area at the bottom of the car park field should still go ahead, but is pushed back due to other grant work eclipsing it's need.
- The sluice door in the ditch adjacent to Teal scrape, will be repaired ideally 2019 still
- Thames Water Habitat Improvement Grant – A few remaining items
 - Posting and fencing the new reed bed and transplanting Phragmites rhizomes
 - Planting will recommence August 2019 and September for 3 years
 - Levelling off the ground by the new screening

Events

Again worked with YesFutures – a charity working with school groups and held a guided walk for 14 children and are seeking new opportunities to support more events and bring some monetary donations into the equation.

2019 Dawn Chorus Bird Walk – 28th April 04:45 to 08:30 (£2.00 per person) was cold but bright, it was fun and lots of songsters kept spirits bright and we had a very sociable time lingering in the hides out of the cold wind.

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Growth, Grant Applications, Fund raising, Appeals & Corporate Sponsorship

I remain personally committed to increasing our membership to 500 by 2019 and we are now getting prices for a banner and stand equipment so other volunteers can help us promote LWT, advertise membership and appeal for donations at local retailers. We would like to hear from you if you can offer 2 hours per month to be a donation collector. I still have aspirations on;

- Attending the Woodley Christmas Carnival costs £29.00 – Promoting membership and selling bird food. It would get us seen by many hundreds of people. If we do start attending events we will need to invest in a proper stand banner, information boards, sturdy table etc. Cost estimates are around £500 for these basic items. No committee decision has been made on this yet, we just need willing people to get started.
- The drafted website page 'Leave us a legacy donation in your Will' is ready to go, anyone wanting to leave us a gift can contact me for advice.

Website, Social Media & WhatsApp FOLL Bird News Group

Our WhatsApp bird news group is so popular now, 150 of our members now subscribe to the £2.00 a year up to the minute FOLL Bird News service. If you are not on WhatsApp, send your news by email info@lavells.org.uk Please keep sharing at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1662435990723770/>

Cycle Path Threat

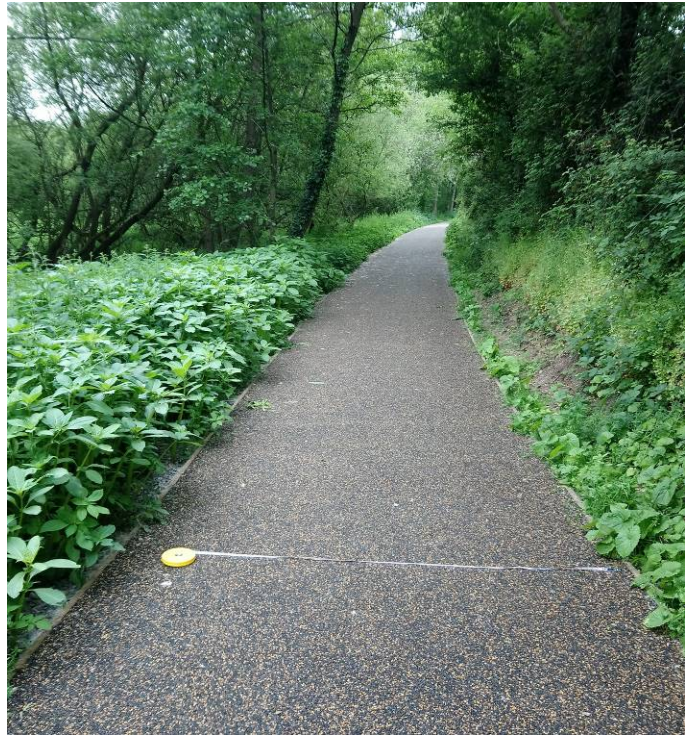
Whilst in discussion with DPCS about the Network Rail habitats we were told that WBC intend to carryout a public consultation to push for a 'Greenway' (cycle paths). As per 2012, they propose a 2m wide track along the Loddon past the West side of Sandford, Lavell's and Lea Farm Lake.

LWT opposes this idea in that WBC have barely finished the track West of Sandford Farm Development, allowing perfectly good access to DP and Winnersh Triangle station. See below the black line is the border of DP, Lea Farm and the nearest section of landfill Summerleaze own, the red line marks the boundary of the new Country Park East of Sandford Farm, flanked by old and new Loddon. The green line is the 'Greenway' under construction, the Yellow is the expected route for the proposed one.





Loddon Footpath as is May 2019



'Greenway' near Aviation Museum May 2019

Which of the above paths do you prefer? If you oppose this too, we ask you send a clear message to WBC when the consultation is launched this summer.

And now the good news....Network Rail Grant

LWT applied and were successful with an application for a conservation grant of over £42,000.00 to create a large new Phragmites reed bed and marshes around the NE corner of LFL. Subject to EA and planning consent, we ambitiously might start excavations this August.

It may fall into 2020, but no matter what Lea Farm is destined to have fabulous new habitats, the next step will be to begin raising money to build a reedbed hide on entry, then an awesome new tower hide overlooking it all. We will notify everyone soon in a formal appeal to fund a substantial show piece hide. (Red ovals)



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The vision

It's all coming together, the plans are in place to improve the NE & NW corners, this will provide awesome shallow pools for Water Rail, Snipe, Teal, Bittern, many passage waders spring and autumn and much more, with a fabulous viewing tower if we can raise the money.

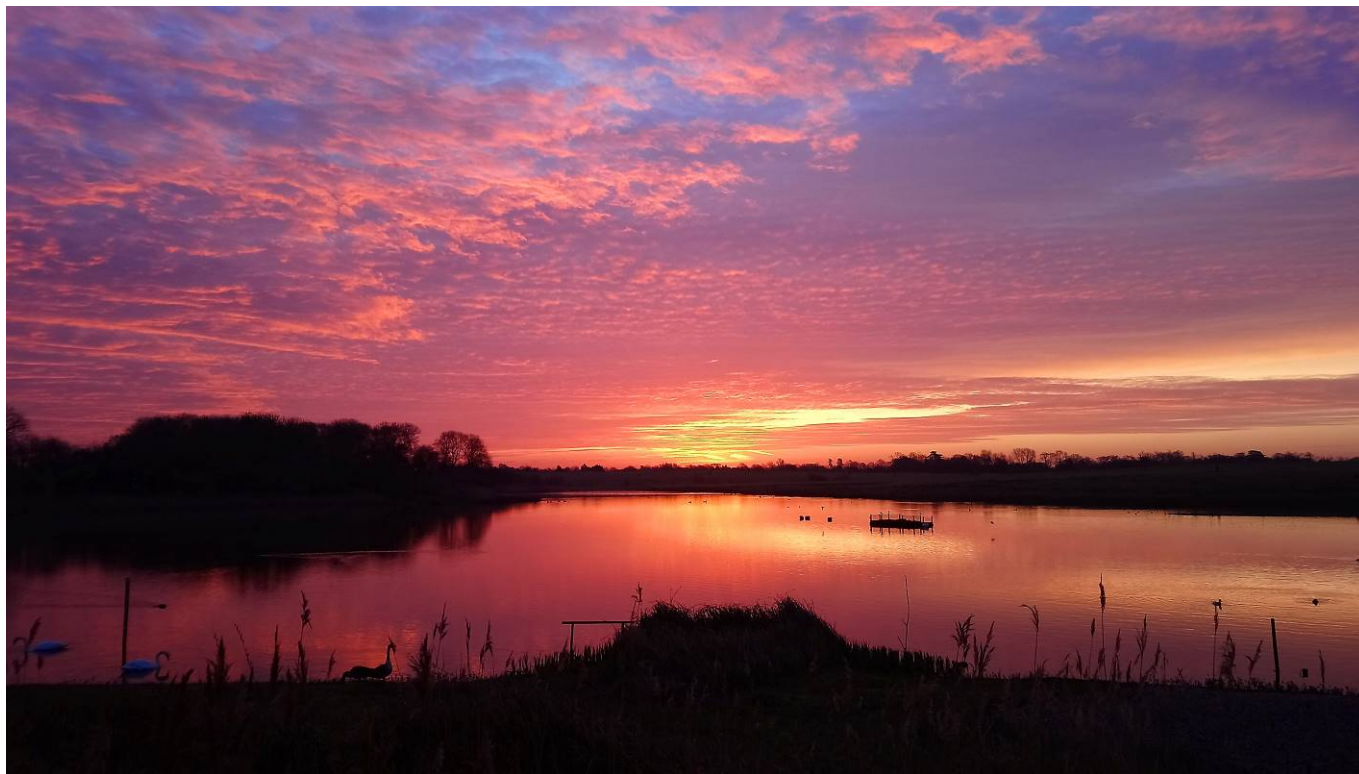
We will grow our membership to 500 in the next 12 months, then it's onwards to 1,000. While we get there we will be focusing on growing our average subscription and donation to £20 per family, upon achieving this we can look at buying Lodge Wood and Lodge Wood Lake in 10-12 years, 10 years after that perhaps the landfill will have finished emitting Methane and we'll be able to buy 300m of grassland to encourage more Skylark, Kestrel, Barn Owls and so much more.

We are going to need a car park and somehow we will make it happen, maybe we will even consider building our own toilets and a visitor centre. It only takes having a dream to begin the journey.

The help we need

We need help with fund raising, people in the stores raising cash, getting memberships, we need expertise in marketing, fund raising, social media etc. Contact us at info@lavells.org.uk

The sun is rising on our future and it is so much brighter than everyone dreamed, let's all be part of making our dreams a reality



Thanks

Fraser