

Lavell's Wetland Trust (LWT) AGM Newsletter 2022

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Welcome to LWT's 4th AGM newsletter, notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of Lavell's Wetland Trust is to be held on 21 June 2022 at 7.30pm in Early St Peter's Church Hall, RG6 1EY.

Agenda for AGM

1) Apologies for absence

2) Minutes – for approval - The minutes of AGM held 15 June 2021 are available on the LWT website <http://lavells.org.uk/about-lwt/agm-minutes-and-reports/>

3) Reports:

a) Treasurer – Phil Kinch:

The LWT accounts for the year ending 31st December 2021 are attached as an Appendix to this newsletter. I would like to thank our Independent Examiner, Delia Allott, for carrying out the examination once again.

Our finances reflect the charity's activities, which are covered elsewhere in this newsletter. There are always a number of changes in costs and income each year. The main things that I would like to highlight are:

- Transfer of the Loddon path element of Ron Bryant's gift of Lea Farm Lake was completed in 2021 and it is now noted as part of our assets. Our legal costs are reflected in our payments during the year and the fishing rights were let to Reading and District Angling Association (who also bailiff the stretch) for £250.
- We received a further £9,569 during 2021 to fund the project to build a new hide at Lea Farm Lake, making a total of £28,243 by the end of 2021. £5,000 came from "matching funding" from Microsoft and the other £4,569 from further generous donations. We had our first project costs, drawings for the planning application.
- Our general fund increased by £3,760 to £38,476 at 31st December 2021. The increase comes because:
 - We received £2,800 for specific purposes, which will be spent in 2022:
 - £1,000 from the Waitrose "Give a Little Love" scheme, which we will use to build a new viewing screen at Lea Farm.
 - A generous donation of £1,800 (plus gift Aid) from a member to buy a container to store equipment, materials and other items.
 - Covid restrictions and their knock-on effects further delayed tasks including:
 - Elements of the Lea Farm Lake project – chainsaw equipment & training, tree pollarding
 - Maintenance work at Ron's hide
 - Tern raft repairs / improvements
 - New owl box at Lea Farm Lake

When we spend these sums, the fund will fall.

- Subscription and bird news income reflects our increasing membership.
- The cost of owning Lea Farm Lake is starting to show, in particular the significantly higher insurance costs in 2021.

b) Membership – Les Blundell. Year ending 31st December 2021

Our membership improved well during 2021 compared to 2020. Lockdown restrictions eased and we were able to fully open the hide for member use and attract new members. We had 61 new members joining and 7 members re-joined during the year. Members lost over the year were mainly due to not renewing, some because of moving away and sadly 3 members passed away.

At the end of the 2021 we had 260 Individual memberships, 153 Family memberships and 66 Life members, 479 memberships. Counting a Family as 2 members, we had 612 members.

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c) Countryside Service Report

LWT and the Countryside Service are in detailed talks regarding habitat management, including grazing. We are grateful to Simon and his team who installed substantial fencing on Lavell's West side to prevent trespassing into Lavell's.

Thanks are due to Dave Noble and Ian Lee for their surveying and datum plotting work and to Andy Meader for helping with our planning application.

4) Election of Officers & Committee - Officers standing down/re-election

LWT's constitution requires a third of the trustees to retire at each AGM. Renton Righelato is retiring. The following trustees will retire and are standing for re-election;

- Jane Campbell
- Fraser Cottington

Bob Bennett is standing down from the committee at this AGM.

Notes

1. ***The present officers & committee;*** Chair – Jane Campbell, Secretary – Angela Gunn, Treasurer – Phil Kinch, Chief Visionary Officer – Fraser Cottington, Les Blundell, Ron Bryant, Renton Righelato. Committee, Bob Bennett, Peter Scudamore, Keith Boseley
2. ***The committee is always open to offers from members willing to help in a specific area.*** If you want to volunteer your service, please email secretary@lavells.org.uk or post to LWT c/o Dinton Pastures Country Park, Davis Street, Hurst, Reading, RG10 0TH with details of the skills you are offering.
3. ***If subscriptions are in arrears, members are not entitled to vote at the AGM***

5) Chair's Report : Jane Campbell

LWT's committee has worked hard as always. Even though Covid restrictions are now lifted the committee has continued to meet on Zoom. Phil Kinch is once again on top of our finances and projections; Angela Gunn is an efficient secretary who keeps us all in line; Peter Scudamore has led our bird walks and many work parties; Ron Bryant is always there with practical skills; Keith Boseley has brought a wealth of practical and management skills to our work parties; Les Blundell manages our membership; and Fraser Cottington continues to inspire. Renton Righelato deserves a special mention as he is retiring from the committee at this AGM. Renton will be missed for his support, enthusiasm, and huge amount of knowledge, particularly around conservation and governance issues. Bob Bennett who handles the latest bird news and photographs is also retiring from the committee but will continue to manage bird news for which the committee is grateful.

Our wonderful volunteers have continued to support our monthly work parties plus an enthusiastic group have attended additional parties on Tuesdays which have been ably led by Keith Boseley. Peter Scudamore continues to run monthly bird walks and our Dawn Chorus event in early May attracted 8 people this year.

As always, we are indebted to Simon Bartlam who has been incredibly helpful in many ways.

Thanks too to all our members who continued to support us throughout the last couple of very difficult years.

6) Habitat Management, Work Parties & Events - Achievements – Fraser Cottington

- Network Rail – Two remaining tasks
 - Phragmites rhizomes which will recommence August for 2 more years
 - Tree pollarding in the SW corner – August or September 2022 & again 2023
 - The excavations have more than proven to attract more waders and more, this year 1 of 2 pairs of Little-ringed Plover have been attempting to nest. Lapwing and Oystercatcher also lingering
- Planting Gorse along the SE boundary of Lea Farm Lake has started, we plan to plant 20 shrubs per year for 3 years for Linnet, Stonechat and passage passerines

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- Ron Bryant & Alan Rymer serviced the rafts in early May avoiding a total take over by Black-headed Gulls, but we will shift the deployment to about 7th – 12th May from 2023 as the 16 pairs of Common Terns are now settled on the shingle island. Rains are forecast this week, so we shall see what happens.
 - We have been discussing ways in which we can provide a better chance for the Tern to nest safe from flooding, one labour intensive option is deploying stone in cages around the outer edge of half the island and raking and throwing into the middle – The end result being a smaller island raised 10-12" with no low edges for the Terns to nest
- The new Thames Water access gate was installed for our future convenience, specifically for servicing the hedgerow and our future plans to mend the path where it gets most muddy
- After decades of running work parties 12 months a year, we are trialling not holding any during the breeding season to allow sensitive species like Little-ringed Plover, Lapwing, Gadwall, etc. a chance to settle down without being disturbed at a critical time.
 - With Tuesday work parties flourishing, from August we will be adding more weekend dates to raise our game and rise to the challenge of tree and scrub management

Management Plans

- We are just a week or so from what we expect to be a 'green light' from WBC planning to go ahead with our plans to build a new hide behind the North Spit islands on Lea Farm Lake
 - All going to plan on sourcing materials we will;
 - Commence boring holes for stilt legs at the very end of July
 - The timber hide construction should thereby commence 10th August onwards
- More stock proof fencing alongside Lea Farm Lake (LFL) is planned, as is shrub planting.
- Building the 'Waitrose Bird Hut' at the NW corner of LFL is still planned
- Repairs to Ron's hide are planned this late summer 2022
- Installing a 'landfill observation area' at the bottom of the car park field is still planned
- The sluice door in the ditch adjacent at Teal scrape is still not repaired
- DPCS and LWT have not begun work around Teal scrape to create promote more scrub vegetation, bramble and Blackthorn to benefit Bullfinch and warblers
- Cattle grazing is being discussed to graze the long grass areas
- We began island vegetation cutting regime on Sandford, this should be done each October
- Path repair and protection on Sandford's islands from flooding and a proper sluice still in long term wish list agenda
- An organic wild flower meadow in the near landfill is possible, Summerleaze Ltd have begun negotiations to install a solar farm on the far landfill, so we keep our fingers crossed.

2022 Dawn Chorus Bird Walk – The Dawn Chorus walk was held on 7th May 2022 highlights included fabulous views of Garden Warbler, Cuckoo, various other warblers and songsters, plus a Greenshank and late winter wildfowl – Teal Shoveler & Wigeon

Snapshot of birding so far in 2022

January 1st has a good degree of predictable species, but this one hit a new day record – 80 species which included Peregrine, Kestrel, **Goosander**, **Blackcap**, **Raven**, **Mandarin**, **Stonechat**, **Skylark**, **Bittern**, **Woodcock** and **Great White Egret**, but a flock of **40+ Brent Geese** flying over at dawn were unprecedented. 2nd produced Mediterranean & **Yellow-legged Gulls**, Shelduck 8th, then 13th another big rarity - **18 White-fronted Geese** behind Lavell's - The first time we have ever had a flock land, yet they went on to stay until at least the 4th February.

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1 of 18 White-fronted Geese



1st winter Mediterranean Gull

On 22nd our first **Caspian Gull** since 2017, Brambling were about but tough to connect with from 25th, Linnet showed up on a few dates. February – Oystercatcher arrived 11th, **Jack Snipe** from 4th, but always elusive, Great Black-backed Gull 19th and now a very uncommon fly over species now. 25th **Firecrest** showed up in Jack's garden.

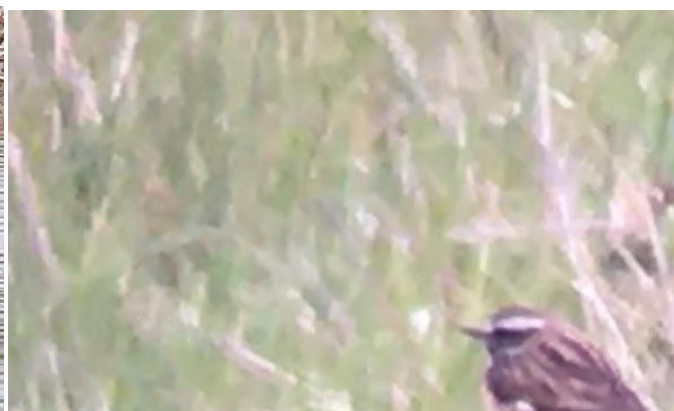
March – A solitary female **Pintail** over 13th, **Red-legged Partridge** near Ron's hide 14th, the first Sand Martins 18th in what was now proving to be what seemed like an unending cold spring of North to East winds. Little-ringed Plover showed up 20th, a Cattle Egret over Jack's house 29th. No Sand Martins appear to be nesting.

April – Still cold winds had us worried, but it was no 'April fool' when Tim James found a **Dipper** at the lake edge of BSL by the fishermen's car park, but sadly it was gone in under a minute. The first Swallow didn't show until 3rd, but big number never came by, nor did Sand Martins, **Wheatear** 2nd, **Curlew** over and Willow Warbler 4th, House Martin 7th, Sedge Warbler 8th, **Wheatear** again 11th & 13th, then 3 Mediterranean Gulls LFL, one staying 29 days. On 18th a rare species for April came in the form of 2 **Greenshank** at LFL, Cuckoo same day, 19th a Dunlin, 24th another very uncommon spring visitor a **Whinchat**, then another 27th, plus 2 **Cattle Egret** briefly LFL, 28th, Swift and Hobby showing up 29th – Overall in April everything was late and hirundines were in very low numbers.

May – 1st a **Yellow-legged Gull** which probably had mixed blood, 2 **Dunlin** 2nd briefly and a **Whimbrel** which as often happens only stayed for 4 minutes. Common Terns were up to 11/4th, 3 **Hobby** 6th, another Greenshank 7th, a rare **Wood Sandpiper** 8th and yet again this rare spring passage wader stayed barely 16 minutes. Another **Dunlin** 10th, 2/11th, 28 Common Terns 12th, 2 **Ringed Plover** 15th, an amazingly late Scaup 16th on Lavell's, another **Ringed Plover** 22nd



Whimbrel – FJC



Whinchat - RHS

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Wood Sandpiper – Jim McNulty



2 Greenshank - FJC

Future Vision – Fraser Cottingham

We hit our milestone of 500 memberships in April and now is the time to invest in a banner and an 'A' Frame or table for during work parties and have a person sat manning a table to act as spokesperson for the morning, their job being to interface with everyone walking by, offer a leaflet where applicable and the idea of using a QR code so that they can photograph it and download the app, or even join on the spot is being looked at.

Lodge Wood Lake has new owners – thankfully they are nature friendly people whom also enjoy fishing. They are in dialogue with us on how to improve the habitats and we have open contact on trespassers. With work in the long term, we may be able to discuss mutual benefits of;

- A shared small scale car park - subject to vehicle access terms yet to be discussed
- A private gate onto the Loddon footpath near the existing Bailey bridge

WhatsApp

Only Lavell's Bird News (OLBN)

Our WhatsApp bird news group is now 253 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/>

LWT Chats & Notices (LCN)

The success of this thread inspires me to suggest we roll out LCN as a standard means to communicate with all members, at least until we have another means to do so. I believe we lose many more members not on OLBN and I think it's worth a try to see if we can retain more members this way

Greenway plans – No current further comment

New restricted access hide – Suggested name 'Mavis Bryant Hide' in memory of Ron's wife

The hide appeal has raised almost £30,000. We will not know until we commence purchasing materials if that will cover all our costs. You can still donate <https://www.gofundme.com/f/fraser039s-campaign-for-lavell039s-wetland-trust>, via the donate button on the LWT website or by cheque / transfer into our bank account

The vision

Post excavation planting of the NE & NW corners are progressing, everyone will soon be enjoying more Water Rail, Snipe, Jack Snipe, Teal, Bittern, Egrets in winter. With the interest shown by Lapwing and Little-ringed Plover so far this spring, if we can find a suitable deterrent for Jackdaws, I foresee successful breeding within 2 years.

When 'Mavis Bryant Hide' is built we can finally turn our attention to others matters and for me this is;

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- Developing a formal growth strategy to increase memberships to 1,000
- Creating a brand image and logo that we feel fits what we stand for
 - Social Media Strategy to leverage the Barn Owl webcam and any other we can deploy in the future
 - Create a compelling application form
 - Develop a template to present to schools & other groups
 - Order an outside banner, collateral and 'pop up stand' for LWT to present and promote itself at all manner of events and venues **E.G.** Woodley Summer and Christmas Carnivals at a rough cost £29.00 each
- Create a Corporate Information Pack encouraging local businesses to sponsor LWT through;
 - Volunteer Days
 - Funding website pages, notice boards, or other content
 - Direct donations
- Create website content for LWT to take a share of the £4 billion that is given in Wills each year
- Develop an effective communication tool to engage with our members to;
 - Understand what membership login functions derive value
 - Steer what quarterly nature engagement events should be run by LWT; these could be;
 - Pond dipping, bug hunts, mini beast walks
 - Junior work parties, bush craft skills
 - Moth trapping, bat watching, nights out under the stars
 - Guided walks, birds, insects, etc.
- Develop an interactive bird news database
 - Allowing members to submit records
 - Allowing high levels of filtering and search
 - Overcomes the need for manual publishing of bird news
 - Overcomes the need for manual import & export of CSV files to keep database current

A.O.B.

The AGM will be followed by a short talk by Patrick Crowley.

Date of next meeting 19 June 2023