

# HENFIELD BIRDWATCH

## Chairman's Report 2025

After a very busy and hectic 2024, this year was about a slightly more relaxing and perhaps a more contemplative year though the first quarter was dedicated to the final touches ready for our 'Birds of Henfield' book. This was achieved by the time of the AGM in April where we were able to distribute to our members and to those beyond our boundaries who pre-ordered the book. It was a huge effort involving a number of people in the production, writing the articles and species accounts, providing photographs, proof reading and then distributing but particularly praise went to Paul Cole who pulled the whole thing together.

I think I can say the book has been a great success and sales exceeded expectation so we had to order further copies. It has been met with great acclaim from within and much further afield and we all look forward to 2050 when we publish the next one for our half-century anniversary!

We enjoyed three excellent talks throughout the year on Stone Curlews, Vine House Farm and Eagles all from excellent speakers with Nicholas Watts's talk on Vine House Farm and how farming and conservation can co-exist providing many benefits for wildlife.

Unfortunately, an issue arose regarding The Village Hall Committee's new rule that the bar has to generate an income of £200.00 from a hire and if not met, the organisation has to make up the difference. This led to a dispute between Henfield Hall and ourselves but thanks to the tenacity of Sara Taylor and Val Bentley, we were able to prove to the Hall we had been considerably overcharged and so the dispute was settled. It does mean however that we will not be able to have the bar open for our talks in the near future.

The walks and trips organised by Val, Nigel and Debbie continued throughout the year both locally and further afield and the number of people attending these walks increased during the year. Our annual Big Bird Bash at the end of May once again proved popular and raised money to donate to Henfield Haven. The area surveys continued and Tony Fitzgerald was recruited to take on part of area 8 and the data has all been 'Birdtracked' and provides accessible data and increased knowledge of the birdlife of our parish. Our Perching Manor Farm survey team continued to do their surveys of the Farm and David Ellin, the Farm Manager really appreciates and finds the information provided very useful. This year, the team have extended their survey to another area of the farm up near Truleigh Hill as well.

As well as becoming an area surveyor, Tony Fitzgerald also now assists Debbie Colgate with the Swift Project and their hard work in monitoring these birds, identifying potential sites for nestboxes and erecting them in new sites is really bearing fruit and slowly but surely the number of breeding Swifts in the parish is increasing.

Information for members continued to be delivered thanks to the hard work of Lesley Milward for compiling and delivering the newsletter and events information, similarly Val Bentley for the Sightings reports and for overseeing the iogroup. Brian Lang continued to oversee and promote our Facebook page while Sara Taylor manages our website and did an overhaul and has now provided a completely new facelift, well worth a visit if you haven't already done

so. A more recent addition to our communication channels is our WhatsApp group which is strictly there to report up-to-date sightings and is open to any member.

As ever, I'll end with a great vote of thanks to my fellow committee members who continue to provide enthusiasm, expertise and initiatives that keeps Henfield Birdwatch the thriving organisation that it is and has never waned though past and present members since our inception 26 years ago. Thanks also go to other members who support us by doing surveys, helping out at events and reporting their sightings to maintain our knowledge of the birds of our parish. Last but not least, your continuing membership allows us to maintain and develop Henfield Birdwatch to continue to ensure that Henfield parish remains a special place for birds. Our membership stands at a very healthy 300 members while the Facebook page is currently at 386, not bad for a parish of our size.

**Mike Russell, Chairman**