

Harbour *Life*

Autumn 2022

In this issue

The Changing Coastline

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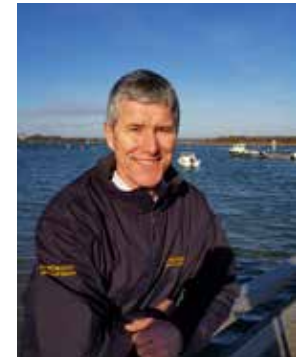


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Welcome

Autumn brings new things to enjoy as the year turns. The leaves are starting to change colour and the first of the overwintering birds are returning. In this issue of Harbour Life we update you on some of our conservation projects, look back on events from the summer and reflect on the loss of one of our Conservancy family members.

The dark-bellied Brent geese and dunlin will soon be arriving in great numbers and are easy to notice, but check out the Spotters' Guide which invites you to discover some less well known Harbour species. Why not let a wildlife expert help you learn even more about the Harbour on a Wildlife Discovery trip aboard Solar Heritage? Details and sailing times can be found on our website.



Richard Craven
Director and Harbour Master




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We'd love to hear your stories about what you love about Chichester Harbour, and how you use it. Share your thoughts and photos on our social media channels or contact us at the Harbour Office.

News in *brief*

Beach Cleaning Brownies

Keith and Katie, our Lead Ranger and Apprentice Ranger, recently supported a litter pick and beach clean with the 1st Funtington & West Stoke Guides at Nutbourne foreshore. The Guides spend one evening a month on outdoor activities, and have worked with our Ranger team before on similar activities. The girls spent two hours beach cleaning, and the Rangers had the opportunity to explain the concept of microplastics and the importance of not flushing plastic things down drains and toilets. To keep things interesting there was a competition for who could collect the most rubbish, and before saying goodbye the Guides thanked Keith and Katie by singing their closing song, with everyone linking pinkies!

Thanks to Debbie Thomson who leads the 1st Funtington & West Stoke Guides.



Out and about

Our brand new trailer has been out and about at various events, including the RNLI's Open Day at Hayling Island. The trailer will be used by our team to support the collection of harbour dues and helping educate Harbour visitors about safety on the water. But we'll also be using it at events including our own open days and at sailing clubs to promote our work.

Harbour Tots Continues!

Our Harbour Tots sessions are back for Autumn 2022. These popular sessions for pre-schoolers will take place outside at our Education Centre at Dell Quay running from 10.30am to 12pm once a month. All sessions must be booked online through Ticket Source, and we'll be covering topics including Harbour Harvest, Beautiful Birds and Autumn is Here. Find out more in the What's On section.

Setting Sail for Charity

We've been delighted to spot Major Mick out and about in the Harbour as part of his new charity challenge to raise money for Ukrainian refugees. Michael Stanley, a 81 year old retired army major from Chichester, built a tin boat, which he's named Tintanic II, before launching from Chichester Yacht Club at Birdham for the first leg of the challenge. Chichester Yacht Club made Mick an 'Honorary Member' and he based much of his sailing at the club during the summer months. He aimed to raise £5,000 for Chichester based charity Children on the Edge, but has almost doubled his original target.



REMEMBERING ROSIE

It's with great sadness that we share the news of the sudden and unexpected death of Rosie Chase, our Executive Officer. Rosie joined the Conservancy team in 2015 and was responsible for managing the various committees and meetings of the governing structures of the Conservancy as well land leases and licences, insurances and legal matters.

As a contrast to all this weighty administration, outside of work, Rosie was an accomplished dog trainer. As an Kennel Club Accredited Instructor, she worked with the Academy of Modern Canine Behaviour and Training, taking groups through their paces every week. As well as teaching others, Rosie demonstrated with her own border collies in obedience and working trials.

Rosie was a very popular member of staff. Her sense of humour and caring nature meant that she could count her many colleagues amongst her friends. We will miss her laughter around the office and her mischievous nature along with the compassion she showed towards those around her.

She loved Chichester Harbour and enjoyed exploring and bird watching with her young son. Our thoughts are with him and the rest of her family and friends as the Conservancy family of staff and members try to come to terms with her loss.



Crabbing Around



This August we hosted two crabbing events at Dell Quay for Ukrainian families who have recently arrived in the UK and are staying with families in the Chichester and Bosham area. Our Education Officer Suzanna Troy suggested and planned the sessions, reaching out to Ukrainian families through her own contacts and other WhatsApp groups. Tim Willway, from our teaching team, led the sessions with support from Suzanna and volunteers, Alex Anderson, Sue Palmer and Mary Humphreys-Roberts.

Despite the very hot weather, more than 40 people joined the first session, meeting on the quay to enjoy crabbing and socialising – with Tim encouraging competition and excitement. There were prizes for those who caught the smallest and largest crabs, along with awards for the runners up and the best crab name!

There was a great atmosphere at both events, with lots of chatter and excitement when the crabs were caught.

At the second session we invited everyone on the quay to join in and our volunteer Sue commented on how wonderful it was to see all families – Ukrainians, local residents and visitors, mingling and enjoying the event together. We had many thanks and smiles from the Ukrainian families who attended. Misha's mum told us it had been an amazing day and both she and her son had enjoyed the event especially as Misha caught an incredible 27 crabs!

*Competition winners
Jake, Misha, Andrii and
Naza and parents.*



Return of the Terns

UPDATE



Earlier this year five new project tern rafts were placed around Chichester Harbour to support terns during the breeding season. Jessica Vagg, Return of the Terns Project Manager, shares an update on how the nesting season has gone - and on another aspect of the project, the small fish population survey.

Tern Raft Success

Thankfully this year's tern rafts were not significantly affected by the new deadly strain of bird flu which has sadly affected seabird colonies in Southland, the Farne Island in north east England, and the Norfolk coast.

However, due to the outbreak and the subsequent risks we haven't been able to get out to the rafts as much as usual to monitor and check the cameras. But shore-based observations gave us the chance to watch the tern chicks thriving this summer and see many of them fledge, ready to undertake

their first trip south for the winter. The final season fledge count will be reported at the Friends of Chichester Harbour AGM in October. A huge thank you goes to our summer intern, Penny from Oxford University, who has been undertaking the bird counts and volunteering her time to support the project.

The rafts will soon be removed from the water and be cleaned and stored for the winter, after another successful tern nesting season!








Small fish population survey

The most recent achievement of the project was successfully conducting our proposed small fish population survey in partnership with Sussex Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority (IFCA). The aim of the survey was to increase our understanding of how both nesting and visiting terns in the Harbour use the area as a feeding ground.

Two sites were surveyed: Pilsey Island, Thorney and the Winner Bank at the entrance to Chichester Harbour. 18 species of small fish were identified, measured and recorded, along with six non-fish species including sea spiders and crabs. The data collected as part of this project will be compared with previously collected data over the last 10 years to give us an idea of how these fish stocks have changed over time.

Follow updates:

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The data is currently being analysed and will be published in a report later in the year. Thanks to the funding from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, we've now been able to purchase all the necessary survey equipment so that we can perform our own future surveys, and run them more frequently too.



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The Wonderful World of Seagrass and Oysters

Sarah Chatfield, ChaPRoN Manager,
and Natalie Huckle, PhD Student

Increasing our understanding of the pressures on Chichester Harbour and the impact they have on the natural world is an important element of our CHaPRoN (Chichester Harbour Protection and Recovery of Nature) project. By understanding these pressures and gathering evidence of their impact, we can prioritise the right steps to take.

Academic research plays a key role in helping us understand these pressures. So we've been working closely with Brighton University to develop a PhD opportunity into the impact of contaminants within the Harbour. And we're delighted that the Conservancy, together with the Manor of Bosham, are now sponsoring a PhD led by Brighton University, with a particular focus on research into contaminants found within

the sediment of seagrass beds and native oysters and the subsequent impact on these ecosystems.

We warmly welcome Natalie Huckle who has been appointed by Brighton University to carry out the research and complete the PhD over the next three years. Here Natalie outlines the research she plans to carry out and why it's so important.



You may not realise it when looking out across the water, but just below the surface, Chichester Harbour holds examples of some of the world's most productive coastal habitats. Seagrass meadows provide a nursery for fish, stabilise the seabed and improve neighbouring habitats by slowing currents and trapping sediment. Native oyster beds filter water and provide refuge for a variety of species, increasing biodiversity. Both store carbon and reduce nutrient levels in the surrounding water.

This productivity is in decline in the Harbour as the habitats decline. There are a number of pressures contributing to this, and my work will focus on water

quality. More specifically, it will look at sediment quality – yes, glorious mud! Teeming with wildlife and providing the route for seagrasses to absorb nutrients, sediment is also prone to storing pollutants and offering a pathway for their accumulation through food webs as well as releasing them back into the water when disturbed. In fact, vicious circles can be created where water quality is worsened due to a decline in the species that improve it, thereby leading to a further decline of those very species and a release of even more pollutants from the seabed.

As someone who grew up in the area and has enjoyed the many pleasures that Chichester Harbour has to offer, I'm now lucky enough to be able to work with the Conservancy, the Manor of Bosham and the University of Brighton to provide supporting evidence to the vital restoration projects that are planned. I will be looking at what is happening within the sediment and how that might be affecting the

plants and animals that call it home. How do pollutant levels differ across the Harbour?

How might contaminants be working together to change the structure of food webs or biological processes of fauna?

These are just some of the questions that I'll be exploring over the next few years.

To begin, I will be adding to our existing knowledge about pollution in the Harbour as well as developing laboratory methods for the work to come. You may already have seen me out collecting samples from the intertidal areas – please feel free to say hello, I'm always happy to meet fellow Harbour-lovers!

In the meantime, read the fun facts about the wonderful world of seagrass and oysters. and keep an eye out for future updates and more facts.

Did You Know...

As well as producing flowers, seagrasses can reproduce asexually through their rhizomes – underground stems that spread through the sediment and produce new growth.

A single native oyster can filter 140 litres of water a day – around the equivalent of the daily water usage per person in the South East.

Our Changing Coastline

Climate change has sadly become a topic many of us are all too familiar with. For those helping manage areas on the coast, the reality of rising sea levels is starting to become ever present. And most recently we've started to see the impact of coastal squeeze at one of our sites in Fishbourne.

Coastal squeeze is a fairly new term describing what happens when coastal habitats are lost in front of sea defences. This is typically due to rising sea levels which squeeze out the area between the tide and the sea defence, such as a sea wall.

Last year, Natural England published a Condition Review of Chichester Harbour. The review shared an honest assessment of the state of our Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), downgrading the area from 'Unfavourable Recovering' to 'Unfavourable Declining'. One reason was coastal squeeze, which has prevented our coastline from naturally rolling back, resulting in a 58% loss of saltmarsh at Chichester Harbour since 1945.

Until now we've always been supportive of replacing any sea defences with like-for-like replacements. But the outcome of the Review has prompted a change of approach and we're now looking carefully at whether

to replace sea defences, especially if there are options to create new saltmarsh, and roll back the England Coast Path.

Coastal Squeeze in Chichester Harbour

In February 2022, Storm Eunice struck resulting in extensive damage at Chichester Harbour, affecting multiple sea defences, buildings, and infrastructure.

One of the casualties was Footpath 3059. The damage forced the closure of this popular path, with walkers asked to divert across the nearby paddock via Footpath 555. After close examination we're now carefully considering whether the path should be closed permanently. The main reason is that it's unsustainable to keep repairing this sea wall, following the Natural England Review. With this in mind we're studying options for a new habitat creation project at this location, as part of our CHaPRoN project.



In the meantime, our Rangers will be installing boardwalks across the paddock on Footpath 555 to ensure it's accessible through the winter when the paddock typically gets very wet.

We appreciate there's a great deal of local affection for Footpath 3059. But it's important to recognise that the coast is constantly changing. Our intention is to always work with nature and maintain Chichester Harbour as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty for generations to come.

Where is Footpath 3059?

This footpath sits on the seawall at Fishbourne Parish. The site is owned by Chichester Harbour Trust, and the adjacent paddock is managed in partnership with a local tenant farmer. The seawall on Footpath 3059 is the responsibility of the landowner, Chichester Harbour Trust.

My favourite walk

Fishbourne



Jenny Hinton,
Reception

This walk around Fishbourne is one of our family favourites. Not too long, so achievable even for little legs, and always lots to see and explore. Autumn is one of our favourite times for this walk; there's often beautiful autumnal light and the chance to see the leaves changing against the backdrop of the Harbour.

We start at the top of Old Park Lane and do an anti-clockwise loop. Heading down Old Park Lane, we stop to see what's going on in the field on the right and, if there's been rain, having a splash in the puddles on the way. Then it's down the footpath to the left of the nursing home, stopping to

see how the figs that grow on the trees are coming along and collecting blackberries that grow in abundance here and at various spots along the route. We go straight on through the fields keeping an eye out for deer and seeing who will be first to spot the local landmarks: Chichester Cathedral spire, the Trundle and Kingley Vale. Following the path round to the left brings lovely views across to Dell Quay and a beautiful Harbour panorama. We always stop at the first footbridge to see if there are any crabs and then again at the little tidal pool on the left as you go through the path lined with beautiful gnarly trees – there's usually



some sort of wildlife to see here. Birds are often diving in to catch some dinner or dragonflies might be hovering above. This part of the walk is one of our favourite photo spots.

We keep heading round, stopping to collect more blackberries and admire the views across the water, especially if we've managed to get out early enough to be greeted to a beautiful sunrise out to the east. This is a great walk for mindfulness and encouraging the children to stop, take in the moment and listen to what they can hear: sea birds, grasshoppers, wind blowing through the reeds and cows in the nearby field to name but a few. Some of the wildlife we have been lucky enough to spot on this walk include kingfishers, water voles and lizards. The boys like to take their nature guides which we got from the Harbour Office in Itchenor to help them identify different things they see along the route.

As you approach the Mill Pond, going through the reeds is like moving through a jungle, way above the children's heads and having to squeeze through the swishy grasses. Beware of spring high tides on this section of the walk as you may get wet feet! Once we get to the pond, we stop to see the ducks and other birds and give them some peas or oats which our boys always love and we think the ducks do too! Then we pop along to the water meadows by following along the footpath to the east from the pond next to the little stream. A quick game of pooh-sticks is obligatory as well as a splash in the beautiful clear stream. Afterwards, we might have a little snack sitting by the riverbank. If we're very quiet and patient, there's a chance of seeing a water vole too.

From this spot there are a couple of options – to follow the footpaths round to the back of the church hall or retrace our steps back to the Mill Pond and head back up Mill Lane, turning left when reaching the main road to complete the loop. There are the two pubs, The Bull and The Woolpack, on the main road in Fishbourne if some well-earned replenishment is needed.

The distance is just right for our boys (aged 4 and 8) as it's just under three miles. We normally allow about two hours to account for lots of stops for exploration but for those with more time and stamina, you can extend it by walking up and back to Dell Quay or further; there's always something of interest to spot or explore. Don't forget a tub for blackberries and try not to eat all the juicy ones so you've enough to take some home for an apple and blackberry crumble!



what's *on?*

Things to do this autumn

Self-Guided Walks

The cooler weather, and changing landscape, offers a great time to explore the Harbour by foot. Chichester Harbour has over 56 miles of public footpaths with a further 7 miles of permissive routes across the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Many paths run right along the shoreline, giving amazing views across the water and perfect places to stop and birdwatch. Others cut across farmland and through picturesque Harbour villages.

Our suggested self-guided walks are available as an A4 sized pack entitled Explore Chichester Harbour which can be purchased from the Harbour Office for £12. Alternatively you can download individual walks from our website. You can also use OS Explorer Map OL8 (Chichester) when walking in the area.

Boat Trips

Solar Heritage is now back at Itchenor following her summer season at Emsworth, and will be running a mixture of Harbour Discovery, Bird Watching and Seal Safari tours through the autumn months. The latest details of all sailings are available on our website and all bookings can be made through Ticket Source.



Dates for your diary

Thursday 10th November - **Autumn is Here!**

Autumn has arrived, the plants are resting, and animals are getting ready for the winter. There will be fun activities to help the children enjoy this season of falling leaves and hibernation.

Wednesday 14th December - **Christmas Celebration**

Join us to celebrate the festive season with lots of natural crafts and play.

Fun for families

Autumn Leaf Suncatchers

With the sun lower in the sky, these autumn leaf suncatchers are a lovely activity, and a great decoration for a window at home. Whilst walking collect your favourite leaves and once back at home cut a hole in the middle of a paper plate to make a frame. Lay the frame over the tracing paper and cut out a circle to fit over the opening. Don't forget to overlap the paper plate so you can stick it down! Arrange the leaves on the tracing paper and glue everything into place once you're happy with the design. Add another layer of tracing paper and hang in a window.



Activity Sheets

Our website includes a range of downloadable activity sheets created for families to help explore the Harbour and its wildlife. Some great options for autumn include Mud Hunt, Acorn Families or Autumn Wordsearch but feel free to browse them all and download your favourites!



Conker Rolling

A very seasonal project when the conkers start to fall! You'll need A3 paper, conkers and paint in a range of autumnal colours. Simply dunk a conker in some paint and roll it over the paper to make some tracks and rolls. Then build up layers using different colours to make a very abstract piece of art!



Chichester Harbour

Spotter's guide

Autumn is a treasure chest of nature spots, and there's plenty to look out for. Here's what to keep your eyes peeled for this season.

Listen out for their high pitched 'peep' calls.
Go early in the day, preferably low tide.

Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

What A very easily recognised bird! Bright, iridescent blue with an orange breast and a white flash across the side of its neck.

Where Can be seen anywhere around the Harbour, but most often seen around marinas and where streams and outfalls flow into the sea, as these attract lots of small fish and offer good places to perch.

When In Chichester Harbour, most often encountered in the autumn and winter. Cold weather may bring more birds to the coast as inland waters freeze.

Did You Know Kingfishers are a bird everyone wants to see, but they are small, easily spooked and fly very fast, so here's a few tips:

Use binoculars to look ahead along seawalls and at sluices and stream outfalls as Kingfishers love to sit above the outfalls or on nearby channels.





Shanny (*Lipophrys pholis*)

What Aka the Common Blenny, the Shanny is a beautiful fish of the shoreline, growing up to about 15cm long, usually seen in small pools or under weed-covered rocks. It has a large head, broad mouth, and is usually mottled green, brown and black.

Where Shorelines all around the harbour, particularly rocky and weedy areas, which provide plenty of cover at low tide.

When All year.

Did You Know A Shanny can survive out of the water for long periods and can be found under rocks well away from the water at low tide. If you find one, remember to replace the rock carefully. The males guard the eggs for several weeks and can be a little bitey, so mind your fingers!

Star Ascidian (*Botryllus Schlozerri*)

What A complicated creature; the short answer is it's a colonial tunicate but the longer explanation is that it's a sea squirt that grows in flat sheets (colonies) a few millimetres thick on rocks or seaweeds – the colour can vary but they form a star shape and look like tiny pressed flowers.

Where These splendid creatures can be found on weed or rocks on shorelines all over Chichester Harbour, but you'll need sharp eyes to find them.

When Possibly all year, but more common during the summer and autumn.

Did You Know Single sea squirts (known as Zooids) such as the Star Ascidian have their own intake siphons, so that they can extract food from the water, but share an outflow, hence being known as 'colonial'.





Mediterranean Gulls

Earlier editions of *Harbour Life* have reported on the rising numbers of Mediterranean Gulls (*Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus*) appearing in the Solent in recent years. In 2022 their presence has been ever more apparent across Chichester Harbour. There was a spectacular springtime passage of Med' gulls in late March and early April, and the latter part of the summer has seen thousands passing through again in the opposite direction, feeding on the debris of the sweetcorn harvest.

A long-term colour-ringing project across Belgium, Netherlands, France, Germany and the UK has given a great insight into their movements, and as there have been a lot in Chichester these past few months, Pete Hughes, our Ecologist, has spent some time recording the rings. And whilst he's seen many Mediterranean Gulls this summer, one of them was a bit more special than the others...Here he explains: 'White 3VTO' was ringed as a young chick in Antwerp, right on the border of the Netherlands and Belgium, in May 1998, making it a little over 24 years old when I saw it near Itchenor in August this year.

Remarkably, after being ringed as a chick, it was ringed twice more, to

replace damaged or lost colour-rings, first in June 2006 in Antwerp again, and then again in May 2021, about 45km north over the border in the Netherlands, near Rotterdam.

Less than 3 months after it was ringed, it was seen at St Helens on Isle of Wight, which seems to be a favourite late summer stop off for this particular bird. It was recorded at St Helens or Bembridge every July bar one between 1998 and 2013. In May and June, it returns to a breeding site in Antwerp. And in the winter, it has been seen several times over several years in Brittany, suggesting it winters on the NW coast of France. As is often the way with migratory birds, it seems to have established a habit early in its life and stuck to it.

This particular bird has now been reported 121 times, giving us a great picture of its life, even though there is a gap of around seven years when it was not reported at all, presumably due to it losing its colouring.

Who knows, perhaps I will see it again next August.

Thanks to Camille Duponcheel and Renaud Flamant for the information on the ringing schemes.

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* Emsworth in July/August