



Berkshire Ornithological Club

Minutes of Committee Meeting

held on Thursday 4th June 2015
at Park House, University of Reading

Present: Neil Bucknell (President), Tim Ball (Chair), Sally Wearing (Secretary), Bill Nicoll (Treasurer), Robin Dryden, Chris Foster, Becky Thomas, Renton Righelato (RRi), Ray Reedman (RRe), Chris Heard.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Iain Oldcorn, Ted Rogers, John Walker, Richard Stansfield

2. **Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 26th March 2015**

Two minor alterations to the minutes were agreed.

Item 6: IO had tried twice this year to contact the University Ornithological Society, in addition to contacting them twice in 2014.

Item 7: NB had offered to help whoever takes over RRe's role to find people to speak at meetings, not to find possible successors to RRe.

The minutes were approved and signed.

3. **Matters Arising**

Item 3 (Sale of BofB artwork): TR had sold the two oldest artworks on ebay, raising a total of £416.71 for club funds. SW and TR will include auctioning the 2008 (Red Footed Falcons) and 2009 (Bluethroat) in the next annual mailing, asking for sealed bids over £200 each.

Item 7 (Programme Sub-committee): It was decided to offer a ringing demonstration in the outdoor programme, probably on a BBOWT site.

Action: TB to talk to BBOWT and to offer ideas for a ringing demonstration to RRe. Continuing.

Item 10 (Website redevelopment): The help page should include information on what to do with rings found on dead birds.

Action: TB to provide wording on dealing with rings on dead birds for RRi to add to website. Continuing.

Item 12 (Photographic competition): SW had informed Colin Wilson of the results of the discussion at the last committee meeting; he was happy with the solutions found.

4. **Formal record of items agreed by email since the last meeting**

No items had been agreed by email since the last meeting.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed.

The cost of the website had increased to £24 per quarter, due to the recent redevelopment.

The online donation system was reported to be functioning well. BN planned to try it out.

6. **Membership Secretary's Report**

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed. Membership was fairly static.

It was agreed that the BOC should continue to try to link up with the University's group. BT and CF were not sure who was running the group at present. They recommended waiting until new people had been appointed to run the group in October or November.

Action: IO to try contacting the University Ornithological Society in October or November.

Publicity Sub-committee Report

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed. RS had provided examples of posters and leaflets.

Action: RS to draft a general email about the membership drive, to be sent to the committee for consideration before being sent to all members.

The posters were approved; they should include the BOC's logo and clearer contact details.

Action: RS to add the tufted duck logo and more contact information to the posters.

The leaflet that RS had printed needed to be updated, as it still included Mike Turton.

Action: SW and RS to revise the publicity leaflet.

It was agreed that the club would pay for modest printing costs. Everyone was willing to distribute publicity material, including NB to libraries in RG8, and RRe to Moor Green, Earley library and community centre. The east of the county must be included.

Action: RS to produce and issue posters and leaflets to committee for everyone to distribute to suitable locations.

Display stands: RRe pointed out that it is always worth being present and visible where other organisations are also 'on show'. RRe was going to attend the Earley Green Fair and suggested that RS should accompany him.

Action: RRe to ask RS whether he can attend Early Green Fair.

Publicity in local press: NB was not sure how many people used local websites. Fraser Cottingham was often on Radio Berkshire, mentioning Dinton. It was decided to ask whether he was willing to publicise the BOC.

Action: NB and RRi to ask Fraser Cottingham to publicise the BOC.

Ask members to bring a friend: this was thought to be a good idea.

Action: RS to arrange with TR to ask all members to bring a friend via email and the website, just before the next indoor season starts.

High profile lecture: It was agreed that the 'Empty skies' film should be publicised well, to all local groups, e.g. RSPB, BBOWT.

Action: RRe and RS to publicise 'Empty Skies' evening as widely as possible.

Membership churn: It was agreed to try to find out more about the turnover in membership, especially why people leave.

Action: IO to provide more data on membership turnover, including any reasons people give for leaving.

7. Programme Sub-committee report

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed.

RRe was happy with the indoor programme; the outdoor programme was now his main concern. He asked for volunteers to lead trips and for suggestions for other trips. BN offered to help with the programme. RRe intending finalising it by the third week in July. NB suggested that it was possible to go to Lakenheath by car, if there was not enough interest to warrant a coach. It may be possible to combine it with looking for stone curlews.

Christmas Social

A proposed format for the Christmas Social had been circulated before this meeting and was discussed. NB liked the proposal, but thought it would be difficult to get people to only talk for ten minutes, so the maximum number of presentations should be 2. He was happy to provide a quiz, and suggested omitting the photo quiz, possibly replacing it with a slide show. He thought that table/wall quizzes would give more time to socialise.

Action: RRe to further develop the format of the Christmas Social.

The possibility of holding an afternoon event was discussed, as the Club needed more social opportunities. This would be in addition to the Christmas Social.

Action: RRe to provide notes on afternoon event to RRe, for him to consider whether to include an event in next year's programme.

8. Conservation Sub-committee report

The minutes of the last conservation meeting, held on 14.4.15, were circulated before this meeting and discussed.

RRe reported that there had been a meeting with West Berks Council and the Canal and River Trust to discuss setting up a trust to enable the BOC to manage Padworth Lane GP as a nature reserve. However, the Canal and River Trust had said that they might want to build holiday chalets on the site and asked for one month to be allowed to consider this option. It was hoped that this would not be viable and that progress would be made again in July.

Work was progressing at Fobney, where willows were being taken out, after checking that there were no nests in the area.

9. Editorial Board Report

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed.

RRe discussed the errors in the 2011 report. Some were typos, which were annoying, but there were also factual errors which were very difficult to control. Although reports could be proofread, it was not possible to check every fact.

More help was required for the 2012 report. The species accounts were mostly ready for editing. RRe had asked Robert Gilmour whether he will paint a buff bellied pipit for the cover.

The problems with proofreading were discussed, including whether it was possible to provide text on paper. It was hoped to finalise the text by the end of July. SW and BT volunteered to help proofread the 2012 report.

Action: RRe to send SW and BT the species accounts to see how much they can proof.

TB asked whether other data, e.g. ringing reports, were provided to the species account writers. RRe said this happened erratically and was his responsibility. Types of data and where they should be published (i.e. ringing report or BoB) were discussed. RRe said that if there were any points that should be included in the BoB, then TB should forward them to him to add to the species accounts.

Whether the RSPB was willing to share stone curlew records was discussed. The Club needs to be cautious about publishing information due to the risk of nest robbing and disturbance by photographers. However, the only data needed would be the numbers at the end of the season.

Action: RRe to ask RSPB whether they are willing to share stone curlew data.

10. Website Redevelopment

The report was circulated before this meeting and discussed.

The new website was working well. The Webmaster, Mike Taylor, had had no queries or problems raised. All annual reports since 2000 were now online. RRe may need help from RRe when he puts the programme up.

RRe was keen to get better trip reports, including photos. RRe encouraged everyone to put more news and other content on the website, especially photos showing people.

11. County Recorder/BRC review

The results of the review and the constitution drafted by the review panel were circulated before the meeting. CH had also circulated an alternative constitution, drafted by him and Peter Standley.

There were some key differences between the constitutions. RRe informed the meeting that CH was not happy with some of the proposed constitution, however all five members of the review panel were very strongly in favour of this constitution and it had been unanimously endorsed by the NDOC Committee. CH produced a copy of a letter from Peter Standley, which had been sent to TB before the meeting, but unfortunately to an incorrect email address. This was read by NB and RRe at the meeting.

Action: CH to resend letter from Peter Standley to TB.

NB noted that keeping the database was not included as part of the CR role. RRe said there was a formal agreement between the BOC and Marek Walford, who had been appointed as the database manager.

The draft constitution was discussed point by point to allow CH to comment. A number of amendments were proposed and agreed by CH, and noted by RRe. In reply to CH's proposal that the CR should have a vote on the Review Panel, NB argued that it was inappropriate for the subject of a review to have a vote on the review's recommendations, although the advice of the CR and/or BRC would be sought.

Action: RRe to propose agreed alterations to the review panel.

Thanks were expressed to the review panel for their work.

12. Events

Events since last committee meeting

RRe gave a brief summary of the recent events. The trip to Thursley Common had been cancelled due to bad weather.

Future events

See 2014/15 programme.

13. Elections to Committee and Annual Members Mailing

Elections to Committee

A report was circulated prior to this meeting showing who had to stand down, i.e. John Walker and Iain Oldcorn, who had both served three years.

BN informed the meeting that he wished to resign, preferably this year, but he was willing to stand for another year if no-one could be found to take over. TB said his service as Treasurer had been brilliant. BN had not identified anyone who might take over. It was suggested that it would be beneficial for someone to join the committee first to get an idea of how the club is run.

TB announced that he was not going to stand for re-election this year.

Possible ideas for new committee members were discussed, e.g. it would be good to have the chair of the University Group on the committee, if they are a member of the BOC. It was thought the volunteers should be sought from East Berkshire if possible. Marcus l'Anson, Gray Burfoot, Brian Clews and John Walker (as chair) were suggested.

Action: All to consider who might be suitable to stand as Chair, Treasurer and to join the committee and to sound out possible candidates.

Action: SW to send out appeal for volunteers to join the committee, via email and the website.

Annual Members Mailing

A report was circulated prior to this meeting and was discussed. The list of contents was agreed.

It was felt that not sending out a printed programme card to all members last year may have been a mistake. It was decided to print the programme as in previous years and to send it out with the 2012 report. The early trips (i.e. those before the report is issued) needed to be well publicised.

Action: SW to include programme card when distributing 2012 report.

As the number of copies of the mailing that had to be posted had decreased, SW thought that she would not need help to prepare the mailing.

Keith Betton, the Hants County Recorder, had asked whether the BOC could publicise their forthcoming Atlas via our next mailing. This was agreed.

Action: SW to arrange with Keith Betton to provide both soft and hard copies of leaflets advertising the Hampshire Bird Atlas.

14. Reports for consideration

Social Media Update

BT gave a brief verbal report. The BOC's presence on social media was continuing as usual.

Both BT and CF will post events if people want more publicity. RRe asked them to advertise the trip to the bird fair in August.

15. Any Other Business

Joint county web resource

NB had circulated a report on this before the meeting. It was expected that it would cost about £3,000 and local groups were being asked to contribute to the project financially.

It was felt that this was the kind of project that the BOC should be involved with and a contribution of £1,000 was discussed. However, this would be large amount of money to take out of general funds. There was sufficient in the conservation fund, but it did not fit the remit of this fund.

RRi suggested that a contribution could be made from the Atlas. There was sufficient money and the project fitted well, as the use of money donated to the Atlas was intended to include websites.

Action: RRi and NB to raise contributing to the joint county web resource with the Atlas Group.

RRi reported that a number of people, especially photographers, had left the footpath and trampled crops while trying to see a red-backed shrike. Ken Moore had spent a lot of time working with the farmer concerned and this jeopardised that relationship. It was decided that to encourage members to comply with the bird-watchers' code.

Action: RRi to advertise bird watchers' code, via our website, a general mailing, on facebook and via Berksbirds.

16. Date and venue for next meeting

After the meeting, it was decided that the date of the next meeting would be Thursday 15th October at 7.30 pm, Park House, University of Reading.

SW informed the meeting that she would be unable to attend the AGM, as she would be on holiday.

Action: SW to find someone to deputise for her at the AGM.