



## **Berkshire Ornithological Club**

**Minutes of Committee Meeting**  
held on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2015  
at Park House, University of Reading

**Present:** Neil Bucknell (president), Tim Ball (chair), Sally Wearing (Secretary), Bill Nicoll (Treasurer), Iain Oldcorn, Chris Foster, John Walker, Richard Stansfield, Renton Righelato (RRi), Ray Reedman (RRe).

1. **Apologies for absence:** Ted Rogers, Becky Thomas, Robin Dryden

2. **Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

The minutes were approved and signed.

3. **Matters Arising**

**Item 12 (Sale of BofB artwork):** TR will advertise the oldest artwork (Laughing Gull, 2005) on ebay first, with a reserve price of £200. SW and TR will include auctioning the 2008 (Red Footed Falcons) and 2009 (Bluethroat) in the next annual mailing, asking for sealed bids in excess of £200 each.

**Item 13 (Basil Ede prints):** RRe showed the meeting the donated Basil Ede prints. It was decided to use them as raffle prizes, making sure they are displayed where people are buying tickets.

**Item 13 (Joint county web resource):** NB informed the committee that this was progressing as planned, with a second meeting being held next month. An independent consultant had been identified to run it, costing about £3,000 (about £600 per county), so funding may be required in the future.

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

The Charity Commission (CC) informed us that the Club's constitution required the accounts to be audited, so the Committee decided to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting in order to revise the constitution. The EGM was held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2015, when the proposed changes were unanimously agreed. The EGM minutes will be circulated to the members via the annual mailing, with the 2014 AGM minutes.

TB and NB signed the revised constitution, as the CC required a signed certified copy.

**Action:** SW to send the revised constitution to the Charity Commission.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed. The CC had now informed BN that gift aid had been paid.

BN will set up the CAF account to allow electronic transfers using a secure double payment system. This would save both time and money. BN would be the principal user, with TB and SW as secondary users to approve transfers. IO would also be a secondary user so he can monitor money paid in online.

**Action:** BN to set up CAF account as planned.

RRi informed the meeting that the donation system on the website was not functional, as URLs needed to be uploaded. Mike Turton was due to set it up this week.

**Action:** BN to talk to MT about finalising the donation system online.

NB and RRi presented a cheque for £10,000 for the conservation fund from the sales of the Atlas.

## 6. Membership Secretary's Report

The report was circulated prior to the meeting and discussed. The position was similar to last year, with about 16 people not renewing.

IO's report showed that membership had increased in 2013 (probably to get QMR permits) but had slowly decreased since then. He thought that fewer people were joining rather than more people leaving, but he was not sure. RRi provided a graph of membership from 2003-2015 (see last page of these minutes), which showed a substantial increase after a publicity drive in 2003/4. The last Publicity Officer (PO) was appointed after this drive started. Although it was good to have a PO, it was not enough by itself; recruitment required the whole committee to be involved. Effort had been put into trying to recruit new people last year, but this had not been sustained.

Other local organisations (e.g. FOLL, RSPB groups) had more members than the BOC; some of their meetings were more sociable than the BOC's. Improving the social interaction at indoor meetings was discussed, but it was not possible to provide catering, as the University charged too much. Efforts to find a suitable alternative venue had failed.

It was decided to concentrate on recruiting new people, starting by establishing a publicity sub-committee, led by one person but with others involved. It would need terms of reference. RS volunteered to chair it and to ask other people to take action as required. The meeting suggested that BT should be on the committee because she was responsible for the BOC's presence on social media.

**Action:** RS to establish publicity sub-committee, initially by drafting a job description for his role and to circulate it for comment.

The following ideas were raised for publicising the club and recruiting new members:

- improving the existing leaflet and distributing to as many outlets as possible, e.g. hides, libraries, community centres
- providing input to local papers, e.g. regular bird round up (RS offered to do this)
- more publicity for existing events
- more news items on Berksbirds, as Marek is happy to put these on the front page
- more social interaction at indoor meetings, if possible, e.g. providing refreshments at meetings not held at University and having a longer break to encourage people to talk
- book more 'high profile' speakers, with a discount (i.e. the cost of attending the meeting) for new members who join on the night
- putting on more id workshops, ringing workshops, or similar events
- allowing people to 'sample' benefits before joining, e.g. bringing a friend as a guest free to indoor meetings
- providing extra 'value', e.g. member only hides
- holding public courses, run by a team
- working more closely with other groups, e.g. NDOC
- publicising the club through Ken White's bird watching courses, if possible
- publicising the club at events, e.g. the Royal Berkshire Show.

**Action:** RS to draft an item for Berksbirds on publicity.

IO had tried twice to contact the University Ornithological Society about joint membership, but had had no response.

## 7. Programme Sub-committee report

The report was circulated prior to the meeting and discussed.

RRe said that he had some other possible events in mind, including a member's magazine, and he would finalise the programme soon.

RRi suggested that showing the film "Emptying the skies" (a 100 min film about trapping) might provide a different type of indoor meeting, possibly in conjunction with someone to talk about what is being done to counteract the problem.

**Action:** RRi to watch "Emptying the skies" to see if it would be suitable for a meeting.

Helen McDonald (who wrote "H is for Hawk") spoke at the BTO conference and was very engaging. She might be suitable for a high profile meeting, which could be good for recruitment, however she might be too expensive.

It was decided to offer a ringing demonstration in the outdoor programme, probably on a BBOWT site. Best time would probably be in the autumn. One possible site was close to a dangerous road, which may be a problem. It would have to start very early in the morning, but RRe thought that this would be acceptable.

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

The format of the Christmas Social was discussed. It was less popular than it used to be; some regulars had stopped attending. NB said that he found it difficult to pitch the quiz at the right level. He tried to include a range of questions, but the same people usually won it. Changing it to a weekend was also discussed, but this was not thought viable.

A number of ideas for altering the format were discussed, including making it a more social event, a table quiz (possibly done individually), short talks from members, a "brains trust" panel of experts (with questions submitted in advance) and displaying artworks produced by members (allowing them to sell them if they wished, with a cut to the BOC).

**Action:** RRe to alter the format of the Christmas Social, possibly based on three or four short talks from members with a table quiz, and possibly including showing artworks.

**Programme Secretary:** RRe has drafted a list of what he does, which will help whoever takes over from him. NB volunteered to sound people out to take on the role of Programme Secretary, and to provide active support/assistance to whoever took it over.

**Action:** NB to sound out possible successors to RRe.

It will be the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BOC in 2017, which will need careful planning.

## 8. Conservation Sub-committee report

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed. The minutes of the last conservation meeting, held on 13.1.15, were distributed in January.

The BOC has put together a management plan for taking over Padworth Land GP from the Canal and River Trust. This area is still being restored, paid for by the gravel extractor. The funding required to manage the site would be significant, e.g. £10,000 per year, plus more funds in case of emergencies.

**Action:** RRi to send draft management plan to NB for review, particularly of the legal aspects.

No tree sparrows have been seen at the winter feeding project. It may need a hard winter to force them to disperse from their existing locations. It was decided to continue the project during the next winter.

The BOC's response to the proposed solar farm near Woolhampton gravel pits was discussed. The impacts of solar panels on wildlife are not fully understood. The conservation sub-committee are waiting for the Wasing Estate and BBOWT to state their positions before deciding what the BOC should do.

## 9. Editorial Board Report

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed.

SW is organising the distribution of the 2011 report, in a similar way to the 2010 report. Most people at the meeting took reports with them to deliver in their area.

Work on the 2012 report had started. About 30% of the species accounts had been written; the deadline for these is the end of April. RRI hoped to have a draft list ready by the end of May, and to publish the report at the end of August.

## 10. Website Redevelopment

The report was circulated before the meeting and discussed.

The new website was now live. Most of the feedback received so far was positive and some was useful e.g. spelling mistakes. It is expected that things will need changing as people use the site more. Any changes that cannot be made by the committee will need to be collated in order to minimise costs.

Thanks were given to RRI and Mike Turton for their work on the website, which everyone felt looked very professional. However, it needs more news items (which will attract people to the site) and photos, including of people.

**Action:** All to send any suitable photos to RRI and news items to TR.

TB requested that 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.

Members had been informed about the new website by TR. IO reported that the membership forms were now on the new website.

## 11. County Recorder/BRC review

The review board had met two days earlier. A constitution for the BRC had been drafted but needed more transparency. The CR was redrafting it, and was due to resubmit it for discussion at the next meeting of the review board in mid to late April.

The BOC needs to educate people in submitting records and was responsible for encouraging people to improve them. This should be done in conjunction with Berksbirds.

## 12. Events

### Events since last committee meeting

RRe had attended the Living Rain Forest event, but did not get a good response. It is not worth doing sessions there in future.

### Photographic competition

RRe had used the Club's projector at the Town Hall, where it had worked well. It was thought that using a HDMI lead would be sufficient to make it suitable for the photographic competition. Colin Wilson (CW) will try this out before the next competition.

It was felt that there were too many photographs in the competition, and that only the shortlisted photographs should be shown, not the ones that had already been eliminated. It was also agreed that the number of photos that each person could submit should be limited to three, as CW was already planning to do, and that there should continue to be two judges.

A £200 budget was agreed for the competition.

**Action:** SW to feedback the results of the discussion to CW.

Although judges have felt that the competition itself should provide sufficient instruction and critique, the idea of a talk on bird photography for members was well supported. It was felt that this should be aimed at the average photographer and advertised at the competition.

**Action:** RRe to include a photography workshop in the indoor programme in 2015/16, instead of an id workshop.

**Future events**

None.

**13. Reports for consideration**

**Social Media Update**

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed.

CF was happy to post events if people sent him a reminder by email. There had been a few odd posts on Facebook, which needed to be monitored better.

Feeds needed to be set up on the website.

**Action:** RRi to set up feeds on the website to Facebook, Twitter, etc.

**14. Any Other Business**

Thanks were expressed to CW and TR for their work on the photographic competition. RRe reported that he had already emailed them to say thank you.

**15. Date and venue for next meeting**

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30 pm, Park House, University of Reading.

**Action:** SW to ask BT to book a room for the next meeting.

Sally Wearing, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2015

**Membership Units**

