



Berkshire Ornithological Club

Minutes of Committee Meeting

held on Thursday 14th January 2016
at Park House, University of Reading

Present: Neil Bucknell (President), Richard Stansfield (Acting Chair), Sally Wearing (Secretary), Eleanor Pitts (Treasurer), Robin Dryden, Chris Foster, Sue Charnley, Renton Righelato (RRi), Ray Reedman (RRe), Iain Oldcorn, Chris Heard.

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

2. **Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 15th October 2015**

The minutes were approved and signed.

3. **Matters Arising**

Item 10 (Website redevelopment): The help page on the website now included information on what to do with rings found on dead birds.

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

Two items had been formally agreed by email since the last meeting.

- The BOC now has Employers' Liability insurance via our existing brokers, starting 1st January 2016.
- Richard Stansfield had been co-opted to act as Chair as no-one was elected to the position at the 2015 AGM.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

The report was circulated prior to this meeting.

Some, but not all, relevant paperwork to transfer access to the BOC's accounts was completed after the meeting.

6. **Membership Secretary's Report**

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed.

In 2015, 20 new members had joined and about 31 had left. Some subscriptions had been paid online via CAF Donate, which were subject to CAF's handling charge. It was decided to investigate whether there are any other systems that would provide a better service.

Action: EP to investigate alternatives to CAF Donate.

CF reported that the University Ornithological Society remained relatively active, with some organised walks. A handful of members came to BOC indoor meetings. There had been no other involvement. It had been agreed that the UOS would pass £5 of its memberships fees to the BOC, but IO pointed out that this would result in a lot of administration. It was agreed not to levy any formal fees on members of the UOS.

Publicity Sub-committee

RS reported that he had not been able to make any progress since the last committee meeting. Immediate action was required to publicise the next indoor meeting on 20th January. RRi had contacted some local groups and asked TR to email BOC members.

Action: RS to contact other local groups to publicise "Emptying the skies".

It was decided not to issue 2015-16 programme cards with the 2012 annual report.

7. Programme Sub-committee report

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed. NB pointed out that his talk would be on Belarus, not Bulgaria.

Indoor programme

RRe asked whether anyone on the committee was willing to put up speakers overnight if they needed accommodation. SW, RRi and EP volunteered, providing they were available.

RRe asked for suggestions for speakers and for offers to speak. RS said he was happy to provide another talk next year.

The University was still reluctant to commit to future dates. From now on, it required all external speakers to complete a form at least two weeks before speaking and to comply with a code of conduct. This applied to everyone that presented at BOC events at the University.

RRe asked CF whether he should programme speakers likely to be less interesting to the University students during their holidays. CF agreed.

The Christmas social had been slightly better attended than previous years. It was felt that the revised format worked better as a social event.

RRe was looking for people to volunteer to organise the afternoon social event on Saturday 16th April, as he was not going to be the main organiser for this. EP said she was happy to help with preparing the event but was unable to be there on the day.

The purpose of the event was discussed. RRi had suggested holding it, following an enjoyable afternoon organised by the NDOC, which included short presentations by members, displays, etc. The aim was to find ways of being more social, as our indoor meetings did not provide much opportunity for interaction. The BOC afternoon should be built around 3 or 4 short presentations. Food also needed to be organised. RS volunteered to talk (e.g. on Trinidad or Namibia). It was suggested that Tim Ball could talk about ringing and the Conservation Committee could give a presentation.

Action: ALL to give ideas to RRe about what the April event could include.

How to attract people to the event was also discussed, and concerns were raised about whether people would come. SC suggested advertising it well at previous indoor meetings, i.e. issuing friendly invitations. Food at social events also needed to be co-ordinated better.

Action: RRe to advertise April social event at indoor meetings.

Action: SC to co-ordinate food at 2016 Christmas social.

The social event in September was also discussed. NB thought that there should not be too many social events in a short timescale. RRe said that the September event would be the only one in the 2016-17 programme.

How to make indoor meetings more social was discussed. EP said that the lack of social opportunities was an issue for new people, who may be reluctant to go to social events and outdoor meetings in case people were not friendly. She had enjoyed the format of the September 2015 meeting where there were refreshments in the interval. However it was not possible to provide refreshments at the University; although catering was available, it had to be booked in advance for a specific number of people at about £2.50 a head. Efforts had been made in the past to find suitable alternative venues, but without success.

Action: ALL to consider improvements to the indoor meetings to try to make them more social and to feedback any other ideas, comments etc. on social events to RRe.

Outdoor programme

Some outdoor trips had had quite a low attendance (e.g. 4 people), but most had about 8 to 10 participants.

The trip to Norfolk in February had been cancelled as no-one was available to lead it.

RRe reported that Ken White had had to withdraw his offer to organise a trip to Florida.

SW reported that she had discussed liability for trips outside the UK with the Club's insurance brokers. They said that they could not see any reason why the BOC could be liable for any overseas trips. Responsibility would lie with the individual and/or organisation arranging the trip, depending on who was involved and how. The brokers recommended continuing to state clearly that the BOC did not provide any insurance and that anyone travelling on a trip should organise their own insurance. If necessary, the brokers were happy to provide advice on specific trips.

RRe informed the meeting that he was still looking for leaders and ideas for the outdoor programme, and was praying for someone to take over.

He said that the Club was not good at reporting back to members about events. Group shots could be taken on outdoor meetings and working parties to be used to advertise them.

Action: RRe to encourage leaders to report back on outdoor trips and to take group shots.

8. Conservation Sub-committee report

The minutes from the most recent conservation meeting, held on 10.11.15, were circulated before this meeting and discussed.

Progress was being made in recommending areas to be designated as Local Wildlife Sites. The meeting with Des Sussex had been productive and surveys on farmland were being organised.

A donation from Brian Clews to the Conservation fund was expected, as he was closing this business.

Matt Stevens of the Hawk Conservancy Trust had asked for help with a project on kestrels, buzzards and red kite. The Trust was planning to expand their research, including into Berkshire and they were seeking help in identifying individuals who might be interested in taking part. This would be discussed at the next Conservation meeting, on 18th January.

Action: SW to ask Matt Stevens for information on the methodology for the HCT survey.

9. Editorial Board Report

The report was circulated prior to this meeting and discussed.

The 2012 report was distributed to all committee members present at the meeting. It was to be issued to BOC members in the same way as the 2011 report, i.e. at the next few indoor meetings, then by asking volunteers to deliver reports near where they live.

Action: SW to organise distributing 2012 report.

RRi will send copies to the species account writers.

Action: RRi to inform SW who he had sent reports to.

RRi had not yet received the invoice for printing, but he expected it to be less than the 2011 report. He also needed to invoice LCE for their advert in the report.

Action: RRi to invoice LCE.

RRi said that he was still trying to find a new editor. Richard Burness had been helping him.

All the species account writers had agreed to work on the 2013 report; some had already started. RRi expected the draft accounts to be done by the end of March and he was hoping to get the report finished by the end of July, ready for distribution in August/September. CH reported that the BRC had started reviewing the 2013 records.

RRi expected the species account writers to start writing the 2014 report later this year.

At the last committee meeting, it had been decided to set up a working group to review the collection and management of records, particularly electronic access and the role of the annual report. The suggested members were: NB, RRi, Richard Burness, RS, Marek Walford and a representative of the BRC. RD volunteered to represent the BRC.

It was hoped that providing electronic access to the database would help make the reports more interesting as there would be less emphasis on listing records. The writers should be able to analyse the data and discuss what was happening to different species.

IO pointed out that any new long-term approach would need to be maintained properly.

Action: RRI to organise the working group to review collecting and managing records.

CH asked if there had been any meetings of the editorial board recently; there had not.

Action: RRI to organise a meeting of the editorial board and to ask Richard Burness to join.

10. County Recorder/BRC review

The report of the current position was circulated before the meeting and discussed.

Since the report was circulated to the BOC Committee, CH had provided feedback to the review panel. The panel therefore needed to meet again to consider his feedback.

Action: RRI to reconvene the review panel to consider CH's feedback.

11. Events

This item focused on BOC events, so all the discussion and actions have been incorporated in item 7, Planning Sub-committee.

12. Queen Mother Reservoir

After repeated attempts, a new contact at Savills (TW's agents) had responded positively about renewing the access agreement for QMR.

Action: SW to continue to try to renew the access agreement with TW.

TW had asked Mike McKee (MM) to revise the risk assessment for access to QMR to include tick borne Lyme's disease, Weil's disease and Brown Tail Moths. MM had done this, but it was agreed that the Club should provide information about these to members, via a short safety guidance document (less than one A4 page) to go on the website and to be sent out with permits. TW may already provide this information online. The Secretary should hold copies of the risk assessment.

Action: SW and MM to develop QMR safety guidance, for the website and with permits.

13. Elections to Committee

At the AGM on 18th November 2015, the following changes were made to the committee:

- Tim Ball stood down as Chair
- William Nicolls stood down as Treasurer and Eleanor Pitts was elected to replace him
- John Walker and Iain Oldcorn both stood down, and Sue Charnley was elected.

As no-one was elected as Chair at the AGM, the committee subsequently agreed to co-opt Richard Stansfield as acting Chair, see item 4.

It was agreed that the committee should seek people willing to be elected earlier in the year, well in advance of the AGM.

Action: All to identify people who may be willing to stand for the committee, to be discussed at the next committee meeting.

14. Reports for consideration

Social Media Update

The report was circulated immediately before the meeting. CF also gave a verbal report. Most of the Club's speakers used Twitter and appreciated being mentioned after having spoken. Anyone could join the BOC's Facebook page and post on it. He asked for volunteers to put reports on social media when he was unable to attend meetings. RS volunteered.

Action: RS to post information when CF not able to do so.

15. Any Other Business

NB requested that the Chair's email address should be transferred from Tim Ball to RS.

Action: SW to arrange transfer of email address.

Tim Ball still willing to provide printing for the BOC and had provided a list of costs to SW.

RD was still trying to persuade his company to put up a nest box and a webcam for the Peregrines on the company's building.

Action: RD to continue as planned, and to report progress to the committee.

NB asked for news items to be issued to members and put on the website about the BTO one day conference and the British Birds email newsletter.

Action: TR and RRi to advertise BTO conference and British Birds' newsletter.

16. Dates and venue for next meetings

It was decided to set the date of the next two meetings at each committee meeting and to change the start time to 8pm.

Thursday 31st March at 8 pm, Park House, University of Reading.

Thursday 7th July at 8 pm, Park House, University of Reading.

Action: CF/BT to book Park House for both meetings.

Sally Wearing
25th January 2016