



Berkshire Ornithological Club



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting for 2018

8.00pm 28th November 2018 at Room 109 Palmer Building, University of Reading

The President, Renton Righelato, in the chair and 50 members present

1. **Apologies for absence:** Iain and Susan Oldcorn, Ken Moore, Roger Stansfield, Steve Pitts.
2. **Minutes of AGM held on 29th November 2017:** the minutes were approved and signed by the President.
3. **Matters arising:** None.
4. **Honorary Treasurer's Report and the Club Accounts:** these were presented by Eleanor Pitts. As allowed under the Club's Constitution, the accounts had been reviewed by Phil Caunt, who Eleanor thanked. He had reviewed the accounts for the last three years and recommended that it would be good practice to find a new reviewer. Bill Nicoll had volunteered to review the accounts in 2019.

The accounts were very similar to previous years, except the income was less than expenditure. This was because two annual reports had been published; the deficit was less than the cost of the extra report (£1,700). A donation of £2,000 had been received for Padworth Lane Lakes.

The Treasurer reported that, although there had been a small deficit, the Club had sufficient funds to meet its plans for the future. She thanked Robert Gillmor, Ray Reedman and members who had made donations to the Club. This included those who gift aided their subscriptions, which increased the Club's income by about £1,000 a year.

A question was raised about whether it was possible to increase the trivial bank interest received, possibly by investing some of the conservation fund. The President agreed that the Committee would consider whether this was possible.

Action: Committee to investigate whether it is possible to increase income by investing funds.

The President thanked Eleanor and pointed out that the Club's income was only just covering expenditure, which was why the Committee had proposed changing the Constitution.

The accounts were accepted unanimously.

5. **Election of Officers:** the Committee proposed the following:
Hon. Treasurer: Eleanor Pitts
Hon. Secretary: Sally Wearing
There were no nominations for Chairman. Richard Stansfield was not able to stand again, as he was working in Dubai.
The Treasurer and Secretary were elected unanimously.
6. **Election of Ordinary Members of the Committee:** there was one vacancy on the Committee and one nomination, Robert Godden, who was elected unanimously.
The President pointed out that four Ordinary Members would have to retire in 2019, so the Committee might co-opt new members during the year to avoid a sudden loss of expertise.
7. **Change to the Constitution:** the Committee proposed that clause 3.2 4 should be removed from the Constitution, thereby removing the option of retired members paying a reduced rate. The President explained the reason for this proposal, saying that it was now unusual for charities to offer senior discounts, the BOC's costs were tending to increase (although they were well-controlled) and the Committee wished to avoid a general increase in subscriptions.

It was asked how this would affect existing members who retired in the future. Existing retired members who already paid the discounted rate could continue to do so, although the Committee would be grateful if they chose to pay at the full rate. However, members would not, in future, be

able to change to a discounted rate when they retired. It was also asked whether it should be withdrawn for existing members, giving them one year's notice; however the Committee felt that the change should not force an increase on existing members.

It was pointed out that some members who paid the reduced rate gave the discount as a donation to the Conservation Fund. The President said that, whilst this source of income to the Conservation Fund would decline over time, the Committee can and does make contributions to the Fund.

The proposal was passed unanimously.

8. **Report of Chairman and Officers:** this was presented by the President. The full written report will be published in the Newsletter and via the website.

Membership: numbers had been slowly reducing, but now appeared to be fairly stable. Members were asked to encourage other people to join.

Policies: the Club had reviewed how it handles personal data, and had published a privacy notice, in response to the GDPR. It was asked whether data that was passed to other organisations was anonymous or not, however no personal data goes outside the Club, only observers' names or initials with bird data. The Club's safeguarding policy was also being reviewed, and should be issued after the next Committee meeting.

Programme: Ray Reedman was thanked by the meeting for his effort over the last 15 years in organising the Club's programme. Sue Charnley had taken over organising the indoor meetings, while Ray continued to organise the outdoor meetings.

Reports/recording: Richard Burness was now responsible for editing the annual reports. Richard had also restructured the BRC, bringing in a wider range of skills. This had helped speed up reviewing records. Renton thanked Richard for his work.

Conservation: the next indoor meeting would feature talks on the Club's conservation work. The Club was happy to provide as many swift boxes as people wanted, however it was too soon to determine how successful they would be as the project had only recently started. It was relatively easy to attract swifts if the box was near existing nests, but, if not, then it was recommended that swift calls should be played, both when they arrived back and in July before they left.

Help was still needed with surveys in general, including the Curlew survey.

9. **Birding highlights of 2017-18**

As the usual format was rather long, the birding highlights concentrated this year on photos of the most notable birds: Great Northern Diver (Jan/Feb), Kittiwake (March), Wood Warbler (April), Lesser Scaup (May), Cranes (June), breeding Goshawks (July), Great White Egret (August), Cattle Egret (September), Yellow-browed Warbler (October) and Grey Phalarope (November).

Renton thanked the photographers for allowing their photographs to be used, and Ken Moore for compiling the list.

10. **Any other business:** None.

The President closed the AGM at 8:40 pm; it was followed by a talk from Andrew Cleave on Birding in Belarus, which described visiting the vast forests and marshes of Belarus during the breeding season.