



# Berkshire Ornithological Club



## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting for 2024

7.30pm 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024, held at Reading University and on Zoom

The President, Debby Reynolds (DR), in the chair and 55 members present both in person and on Zoom.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Sue Truby
2. **Minutes of the AGM held on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023:** the minutes were approved via a show of hands and online vote and will be signed by the Chair.
3. **Matters arising:** None.
4. **Honorary Treasurer's Report and the Club Accounts:** these were presented by Edwin Bruce-Gardner (**EB-G**). The accounts and Treasurer's report had been circulated before the meeting and will be available on the Club's website.

**EB-G** thanked everyone who donated to the fund in memory of Dot Lincoln, a stalwart member of our club who served for many years as our membership secretary. The donations were used to fund the refurbishment of the Sand Martin wall at Lea Farm Lake. Peter Driver was thanked for organising the sale of the remaining six Robert Gillmor artworks that we owned.

**EB-G** thanked Martin Newell for examining our accounts.

**DR** thanked **EB-G** for his clear accounts which were accepted via a show of hands and an online poll.

5. **Election of Executive Officers:** The Committee proposed the following:  
Chair – Sally Wearing      Treasurer – Edwin Bruce-Gardner      Secretary – Jane Campbell

They were all elected via a show of hands and an online poll.

6. **Election of Ordinary Members of the Committee:** there are six elected Ordinary Members. This year there were two vacancies, due to the retirement of Bob Lyle and Anna Mortimer. **DR** thanked Bob and Anna for their work.

The nominations from the Committee were Ken Moore and Sue Charnley. Both were elected via a show of hands and an online poll.

7. **Report of Chairman and Officers:** Sally Wearing presented the Chair's and officers' reports. The full written report will be published via the Club's website.

### Chair's Report

**SW** reported that her second year as Chair had been as demanding as her first. As with any organisation staffed solely by volunteers, there is more to do than time available.

One major improvement this year is that Peter Driver has taken on the role of Publicity Officer. A very welcome change after many years of this post being vacant.

We are always looking for volunteers to help run the Club; we have a range of tasks that need doing, so any help is welcome, from a few hours to taking on a specific role.

### Membership

**SW** thanked Iain Oldcorn, our Membership Secretary for his work. There is still a gradual decline in memberships, but the good news is an increase in University Members. We have

continued to invite other local groups to our events. Administrative changes have produced better joining instructions on our website and minor changes to QMR process.

A request was made for anyone receiving our communications by post who has an email address to inform Iain as this helps to reduce postal costs.

## **Programme**

### **The Indoor Programme**

Thanks were given to Sue Charnley for an excellent and varied season of talks. Free refreshments were available and clearly popular. People are increasingly attending in person. We continue to provide our talk on Zoom, and although not popular with everyone, this does benefit some.

**SW** could not mention all the talks and singled out the wonderfully illustrated talk 'A Peregrine Monograph' by Steve Watson and Richard Sale. The AGM in 2023 was quorate and was followed by a terrific talk on Saving the Stone Curlew by Keith Betton. The Christmas Social included two short talks and two entertaining quizzes, plus Sue's excellent Christmas food and drink. Although not well attended it was fun and sociable for those there.

Sue would like to retire from this post after the next season. Let us know if you can help.

### **The Outdoor Programme**

There was a full programme of local and regional walks last season, mostly well attended.

SW thanked Robert Godden for organising the outdoor programme last year.

Outdoor meetings continued with travel to local and regional destinations by private car. Some minibus trips were planned last season but we were but sadly let down by the transport companies at short notice. Last minute planning meant all trips went ahead. A coach trip to Slimbridge was well attended.

We still need someone to take on this role - the main responsibility is to plan the programme. We have a team of leaders, although we could do with a few more.

### **Publicity Report**

**SW** thanked Peter Driver who became publicity officer in April 2024. There is now improved publicity for our meetings, in addition to that provided by **IO**. Thank were also given to Johana Simonova for her poster design.

There are now more posts on Facebook, Instagram and 'X', including members' photos and artworks, and photos from outings.

**PD** is trying to reach new audiences and is also promoting the Conservation Fund, with website and social media posts about grants given for conservation projects.

Members were asked to tag BOC or @BerksBirdClub in any of their bird-related posts on social media.

The club has a new publicity leaflet for distribution at events, and in local outlets such as libraries and hides. If you can help distribute these let us know.

BOC had a stand at Earley Green Fair manned by four committee members.

Future plans include a BOC stand at Wild Tilehurst Nature Fair in January and developing plans for a public event at a local site.

### **Editorial Board**

The editorial board continues to make progress with catching up with annual reports.

The 2019 report was published earlier in the year and the 2020 report has just been published. Its cover is the 1954 cover by Robert Gillmor which was felt suitable to end his involvement.

We would like to include more photographs from more photographers. Although the focus tends to be on rarities we welcome good quality photographs of more common birds.

### **Conservation Sub-committee**

There has been considerable activity this year in relation to the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The Club made submissions to the lead authority (Windsor and Maidenhead) at the outset of the initial consultation process, and we have been represented on the working group involved with preparing the list of priority species and the measures to be promoted under the strategy. A draft strategy is now with the six authorities for approval as a draft for circulation for a further round of public consultation later this year.

There have been developments on the Padworth Lane project. The mineral company that extracted the gravel has indicated that it does not want to progress the plans discussed for many years with the club and others. They are carrying out new surveys, and we await their revised proposals for the restoration of the site for nature.

Elsewhere, our discussions with the Environment Agency about the condition of the Dorney Wetlands, have come to a halt due to lack of resources on their part.

Patrick Crowley has continued co-ordinating efforts to monitor Peregrine breeding sites and liaison with their owners. As with last year, although birds have been present at least at nine sites, again a number of pairs failed to raise young at sites where successful breeding occurred in previous years. Results from Curlew surveys in the Downs were also poor, with no birds recorded during the standard recording visits, although there were casual breeding season records from the two sites covered.

The club completed a further round of farm surveys for the Sulham Estate. The Estate has made a £1,500 donation to the Conservation Fund for our help.

Two applications for grants from the Conservation Fund were approved. One for the provision of Barn Owl nestboxes in Mortimer and the second to safeguard nesting Little Ringed Plovers and Lapwings in the Pang Valley.

Although we are still safeguarding funds in the hope that the Padworth Lane project will proceed, we do have funds available for small grants so please contact us if you have a suitable project seeking support.

## **Thanks**

**SW** thanked committee members for their hard work and contributions over the last year. Bob Lyle and Anna Mortimer are retiring from the committee at this AGM, **SW** thanked them for their contributions and welcomed Ken Moore and Sue Charnley to the committee. **SW** asked that members consider volunteering.

Robert Godden thanked Peter Driver and Bob Lyle for leading so many outdoor events.

## **Any other Business**

None.

The President congratulated **SW** for her effort, enthusiasm and energy as Chair and closed the AGM.

Refreshments were served followed by a very well received talk by Ray Reedman on his latest book, 'The Vanishing Mew Gull'.