

**Membership:** bucking the trend seen by many clubs, the BOC continues to grow: we passed the 300 mark early in the year and membership now stands at about 312 units – taking joint memberships into account, that's well over 400 members. A lot of people have contributed to this doubling of membership in the last six years, but none more so than Dot Lincoln and Ruth Angus.

As Publicity Officer, Ruth has put a huge amount into developing our promotional material and presenting the Club, at events, libraries, garden centres, bird hides across the County. After six years of hard graft, she has asked for a bit of time off, though thankfully is still helping out. Ruth, you've been brilliant - perhaps we could show our appreciation now.....

Dot, who has been our Membership Secretary for as long as I can remember, has signalled her intention to "retire" at the next AGM and we will thank her formally then, but we do need to plan now for these changes. So the Committee has formed a sub group, led by Colin Wilson and including Dot, Ted Rogers and others, which will look after membership, Club publicity, the website, newsletter and other communications to continue the Club's growth.

The Committee has also set up an **Editorial Board** to manage the records database and produce the report. This is chaired by Ken Moore and includes Marek Walford, who looks after the database and Derek Barker whom we should thank for almost single-handedly writing the 2005 report and who has daringly taken on all of the species accounts for the 2008 report!

I am sorry that we were unable to publish a report last year; but Colin Wilson has the report for 2006 & 7 well in hand and the new Editorial Board is tackling the 2008 and 9 reports with a vengeance.

I can't leave the reports without thanking Colin Wilson. As Managing Editor over the last six years, he helped clear much of the report backlog, he significantly enhanced the quality (and thickness) of the report and created an important income stream for the Club from sale of records searches. Colin is not here tonight, but I do think we should record our appreciation.

Ray Reedman organised a typically full and varied **programme of evening meetings**. Thanks Ray. Do please give us feedback on what you would like to see in the programme. As some of you will remember, we had some problems with the University's facilities, so we again looked for alternative venues, but so far have been unable to come up with anything of comparable quality and accessibility in the central Berkshire area.

We had a busy **outdoor season** with over 20 visits; the highlights perhaps being the Norfolk weekend in February which managed an impressive 140 species, and the Dungeness visit which provided Glossy Ibis, Great White Egret and White-rumped Sandpiper. Our thanks to the many people who

have organised and led trips including but not limited to Bill Nicoll, Dot, Ray Reedman, John Roberts, Ted Rogers. **This year** is just as full, with several new venues and a week in Spain in April, led by Ken White – fully booked, but another is being planned.

New members may be particularly interested in the **mid-week walks**, which are a good way of getting to know local birding spots and to make social contact with other members.

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On the **survey** front, the last three years have been dominated by work on the Atlas. Hundreds of observers have contributed to the Berkshire atlas database of around a quarter of a million records so far, which is great. We are just entering the last year of recording and will be focussing on filling gaps in the data. So expect pleas for help when the Atlas team reports to the Club in March.

Lastly conservation: I will just mention a few of the issues that the BOC has been involved with in last year:

- John Lerpiniere continues to represent the BOC in several conservation forums in the county.
- The RBC-led project to convert Fobney Island into a wetland reserve is still at the design stage but inches forward.
- Now that the immediate threat of development is over Colin Wilson and Neil Bucknell are looking at ways to enhance the protection of the lower Kennet valley.
- We have just entered discussions with the National Trust at Basildon Park on surveying and possible conservation projects.
- The Conservation Fund made a grant of £1,000 towards work at Hosehill Lake to improve the reed-beds as bittern habitat.

Conservation is an area in which I believe the BOC could have and should have a bigger impact. Right now particularly, because we have to expect that national and local government conservation work will be squeezed and it will be increasingly up to the voluntary sector and organisations like the BOC to take the lead.

I can't finish without thanking Mike Turton for stepping in as secretary and doing such a super job.

Gordon – An active club like this depends on a lot of enthusiastic, hard-working people: and the BOC is blessed with just that. It's an honour and pleasure to work with them.