



Berkshire Ornithological Club

Minutes of Committee Meeting

held on Thursday 24th January 2019

Park House, University of Reading

Present: Renton Righelato (President) (RRi), Eleanor Pitts (Treasurer), Sally Wearing (Secretary), Sue Charnley, Ken Moore, Andy Horscroft, Rob Godden, Chris Foster.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Ray Reedman (RRe), Iain Oldcorn, Jake Bishop.

2. **Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 25th October 2018**

The minutes were approved and signed.

3. **Matters Arising**

Trustees. Adrian Lawson had not signed the new disqualification declaration.

Action: AL to complete the new disqualification declaration and send it to SW.

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

It had been decided to co-opt Chris Foster to join the Committee.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

The report had been circulated before the meeting and was discussed. EP said there was one error in the report: a donation had been received at the meeting on 16.1.19, not 16.1.18. She also pointed out that £323 had been given to Newbury Ringing Group, not £23 as in the minutes of the Conservation Committee, 21st November 2018.

EP asked that, now the retired discount is being phased out, did she still need to keep track of overpayments of subscriptions? It was agreed that unless a member specified an overpayment as a donation to the conservation fund, it should be treated as other subscriptions and go into the general fund.

As specified in the Constitution, anyone who joins after the end of April does not have to pay for the following year. The payments cannot be accrued as the accounts are on a cash basis. EP has to record who has paid in advance to ensure they are still members, as they will not have to pay in the next financial year. It would reduce EP's workload if they did not pay until 1st October, however most payments between 1st May and 30th September are made via the internet so delaying them would not be feasible.

RRi said that the Conservation Committee would review their financial reserves policy at their next meeting. This would inform the planned review of the BOC's reserves policy at the Spring Committee meeting, which will consider Phil Caunt's comments about the policy.

Action: EP to consider Phil Caunt's recommendation and the Conservation Committee's reserves policy proposal when the BOC Reserves Policy is reviewed at the next committee meeting.

It was agreed not to change the bank accounts signatories until a new Chair is elected.

A question was raised at the 2018 AGM about whether it was possible to increase the trivial bank interest received, possibly by investing some of the conservation fund.

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

6. **Membership Secretary's Report**

The report was circulated prior to the meeting.

Following the 2018 AGM, it was agreed that existing members who did not already claim the retired discount could not do so in the future, even if their circumstances changed.

Safeguarding: the revised safeguarding policy and letter to family members were circulated prior to the meeting. Two minor revisions were agreed. The membership information on the website also needed updating to remove inconsistencies about age.

Action: SW to revise and circulate the safeguarding policy and letter to family members.

Action: SW to update the membership information on the website.

7. Publicity and Advertising

This section will now cover all aspects of promoting the Club, including at events and via social media.

RRi said that the Club still needed a Publicity Officer. CF volunteered to take on this role. His offer was welcomed!

Action: SW to forward job description for Publicity Officer to CF.

Promoting indoor meetings was discussed. The next meeting, with the RSPB Chairman, had already been advertised to the local RSPB groups, who were actively promoting it. The Club and its meetings should be promoted during the evening.

Action: SW to arrange printing of membership leaflets and current programmes to take to the next indoor meeting, plus 2014 and 2015 reports to sell.

The local BTO conference on 9th March in Benson would be a good opportunity to promote the Club. RRi had booked a table for the Club and needed people to be there, especially in the breaks, to give out leaflets, etc. CF said he might be able to attend.

JB had volunteered to redesign the membership leaflet but had not been able to do so. The action was therefore transferred to CF.

Action: CF to redesign membership leaflet then circulate for comment.

8. Programme Report

Indoor Programme: the report was circulated before the meeting and SC gave a verbal update. She was still waiting to hear from a few people to confirm talks. Stephen Lovell could talk either about Lincolnshire Birds & Reserves or about the Somerset Levels. CF said that little was heard about Lincolnshire. It was agreed the topic would be Lincolnshire.

The meeting before Christmas 2019 was discussed. SC suggested it should be similar to 2018, but with only three talks as there was not enough time for four. RRi said that the evening had gone well, especially because SC had provided food and drink in the break which had brought everyone down to the front. SC had programmed it for 11th December but asked whether it should be a week earlier to avoid clashing with Christmas events. It was agreed that that would be too early, so it was decided to keep it on 11th December.

RRi said that Neil Bucknell had suggested Nick Moran to speak on nocturnal migration. SC said she would contact him, if she hadn't already done so.

SC said that the talk after the AGM should be attractive and asked for ideas. RRi said it should be only a one-hour lecture to fit with the AGM. SC suggested asking Ashley Grove to give his talk "Jewels of the Gambia". RG proposed one of his friends who he had travelled with to northern Peru, as his friend had taken marvellous photographs. SC suggested that this could be part of a member's evening.

Action: RG to ask his friend if he is willing to give a talk and, if so, how long.

SC asked SW if she was willing to give a talk. SW agreed and suggested that it should be part of the Christmas evening.

RRi said that the programme was going well this year, with good audiences. The talk on Fair Isle was especially enjoyable.

Photographic competition: RRI asked how this was progressing. SC thought that only two people had entered so far. It was only open to members. Possible judges were discussed, including Colin Wilson who used to run it. RRI said that he believed Ted Rogers had the trophy, which last year's winner had returned.

Action: SC to ask Jane Campbell for a progress report on the competition.

Outdoor programme: SW informed the meeting that RRe is now starting to draft the programme, using the dates of the indoor meetings as a guideline.

Outdoor Programme Secretary: RRI reminded everyone that a successor to take over from RRe was still required and asked if anyone wanted to volunteer. How much work was involved was discussed. The role included liaising with all leaders, and organising the coach trips, which could be difficult. SW suggested considering the people who were leading outdoor events this year.

Action: SW to ask RRe to write a short description of what the role entails.

Action: All to inform RRI and RRe if they have any ideas for a successor to RRe.

9. Conservation Sub-committee report

RRI's report and the minutes from the meeting of the Conservation subcommittee on 21st November 2018 were circulated before the meeting.

EP asked about the difficulty with getting people to report sightings; people need to know how to report them and what they should report. RRI said that RB (the County Recorder) preferred people to report electronically via Berksbirds. This information is on the BOC website, but EP suggested that it should be repeated at meetings.

Action: RRI to add how to report sightings to the slides used at meetings.

EP, SC and SW all said that they were unsure what was worth reporting. A few examples were discussed. KM understood the issue and said that some reports that might appear ridiculous might be important depending on the location, etc. CF asked if reports could be confidential. RRI said people could submit records as confidential via Berksbirds or send them directly to RB. KM said he would talk to the BRC about producing information on how to submit records.

Action: KM to discuss creating a leaflet about reporting sightings with the BRC.

RRI said that the Theale planning application hearing had started; Neil Bucknell had already spoken at it. It was likely to last for about ten days.

10. Editorial Board Report

The report was circulated prior to the meeting. Richard Burness had received more offers to write species accounts, and thanked IO for asking for volunteers in the newsletter. The next report should be published in late summer. Rob Still was preparing the birding site booklet, which should be ready in a few months.

Copies of Past Reports: RRI said there were two issues: the Club's archive (see below) and the spare copies. The BRC had suggested that they should hold the old copies of the annual reports. AH was able to store them and to provide copies to anyone wanting to buy them. The spares are currently held by SW and Marek Walford, who had told AH he was happy for them to be stored by AH. SW said that the Secretary used to keep copies of the last five reports, but now only the most recent were likely to be bought.

Action: SW to give spare copies of reports to AH.

Action: AH to obtain rest of spare copies from Marek Walford.

Club Archive: this was held by Peter Hutchins, and included a set of annual reports, minutes, etc. RRI asked whether the County Recorder should hold the archive. RB was happy to hold the report archive, i.e. one of each one that had been published. RG asked whether the BRC kept the records sent to them on paper or not, as there would be some information in the original records that were not in the annual reports. AH said that the BRC

has the old records back to the 1950s and will keep them. KM said that Peter Standley also had some records. RRi said that questions did sometimes come up about the old records.

Action: SW to find out from Peter Hutchins what is in the archive.

Action: AH to investigate what the BRC holds.

RRi said that that BRC had met last week and had already published the minutes, and it was good to see the way things were progressing.

Garden Bird Survey: IO had recently revised the recording form and issued them solely for members to use. EP said the form was excellent and the data should be collated electronically; the Club could ask members to enter the data into a website, which, in her experience, could easily be set up to collate the data. RRi said that it was not a trivial task to set up such a website. CF asked how many people were likely to send data in; EP said that numbers had dwindled but they were not likely to send data if there were no results or feedback. In the past, the Club had offered the survey data to the BTO, but they were not interested in taking it. It was decided not to pursue this issue further.

11. Other Events

There were no other events.

Action: SW to incorporate this section and the next section (Social Media) in item 7, Publicity and Advertising, from now on.

12. Reports for Consideration

Social media: JB had reported that he had put all the BOC events on Facebook before Christmas. They should have been flagged up when they were imminent, but this did not appear to be working. SW said that the BOC events were not in the calendar in Facebook.

Action: CF to advertise all BOC events on Facebook.

JB and AL had been actioned to investigate whether it was worth paying Facebook to promote events, as this was not expensive. CF volunteered to take over this action.

Action: CF to investigate paying Facebook to promote the BOC's events.

RRi asked if a feed had been added from Berksbirds to the BOC Facebook page. There was already a feed to the BOC website.

Action: CF to find out if sightings on Berksbirds can be fed to the BOC's Facebook page.

13. Election of Officers

Role of Chair: IO had proposed that the role could be spilt, as it is difficult to find someone who can fulfil all of it. There had not been a Chair for some time; RRi did not think it was good for the President to be standing in. The Club needed a new Chair to help it develop.

The meeting discussed why it was difficult to find someone. RRi said it was a fairly easy role. EP said this was true for someone who knew a lot about birds and who was influential in the Club, but it would be harder others. RRi said someone could grow into the role and that the Secretary had often moved to the Chair; SW pointed out that she would be happy to pass on her role to someone as this was her fifth year, but someone needed to volunteer.

RRi suggested rotating chairing Committee meetings, with RG chairing the next, then SW the one after. EP volunteered to take the minutes for the first time SW was chairing the meeting. The Committee should decide by the next AGM who they wanted to nominate as Chair.

Action: RG/SW to chair the next two BOC Committee meetings.

CF asked if indoor meetings did not have to be led by the Chair; he would be happy to do it. Whoever chairs the meeting needs to update the slides used at the start. It was agreed that the chair at indoor meetings would be:

30th January – RRi, 13th February – CF, 27th February – SC.

Action: RRi to send slides to CF, SC and SW.

14. Any Other Business

No bids were received in the auction for two of the annual report artworks, Oystercatchers (2010) and Roseate Tern (2011). RRI suggested that this was because the reserve (£250) was too high. The Club has another four (2012-2015) as well. Artworks have been sold online in the past. It was decided to ask members again, with a closing date of the end of February, then, if that failed, to try selling them online.

Action: SW to advertise the 2010 and 2011 artworks to members via email, asking for offers above £250.

15. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

Thursday 11th April.

Venue to be determined, as Park House is already booked.

Action: SW to arrange venue.

Sally Wearing
3rd February 2019