

## **LBC committee meeting minutes - November 19 (7.30pm) held at the Coach and Horses, Hemingby**

1 Chairman Phil Espin welcomed committee members John Watt, Phil Hyde, Bill Sterling, Michael Harrison & Jim Wright, plus club member Chris Grimshaw.

2. Apologies for absence: Andrew Chick and John Badley (committee members), Anthony Bentley (club member).

3. Minutes of July 16, 2019, meeting (as posted on website) were confirmed as a true record/ signed by chairman.

4. Matters arising

a) Prof Ian Newton was confirmed as club president. PE read the contents of a letter from Prof Newton graciously accepting the position. PH asked for courtesy copy of minutes to be supplied to the president. Agreed

b) Co-option of new committee member to replace John Clarkson. No progress to report.

c) Update on revisions to membership arrangements to encourage recruitment of young people. There was a short but inconclusive discussion. There is little indication that under-25s have much interest in joining the club. JWa doubted if the cost of membership was a deterrent. PE said he would publicise the club in a talk on bird recording techniques he will be giving to 15 environmental studies students later this week. The discussion widened to include the pros and cons of electronic subscription (via ebay) and direct debit (which encourages greater loyalty). MH queried if membership application forms were still available. PH said young people did not want to bother with "filling in lots of paper".

d) Update on launch of WhatsApp group for LBC members. PE reported that this was launched on September 18th and currently has 45 members. A stipulation of joining is LBC membership.

e) Update on birding event/party at Frampton Marsh held to mark jointly i) the 40th anniversary of the LBC and ii) the 10th anniversary of the opening of the RSPB. PE reported that this did not materialise due to short notice and insufficient committee members being available to support the event.

5. Annual joint meeting - LBC/LNU. Confirmed this will be at Whisby at 2pm on January 11, 2020, with Barrie Wilkinson as guest speaker on the history of Gibraltar Point about which he has written an excellent book.

6 LBC annual meeting - March 24, 2020 at The Golf hotel, Woodhall Spa. Confirmed that Prof Tim Birkhead, of Sheffield University, has agreed to be guest speaker on *Bird Sense - What It's Like to Be A Bird*. Terms of his visit approved. JWr has provisionally booked meeting room at the hotel. Jwa agreed to confirm meeting room booking plus booking for b&b at hotel (overnight March 24). No support for suggestion by JWr that club should introduce an admission charge or sell raffle tickets to defray costs. PE noted that members are entitled to attend AGMs without charge.

7. Update on compilation of 2018 report PH reported encouraging progress, with 180 species reports already received and a wealth of photographs, though no obvious candidate yet for front cover. Subjects of proposed articles include Redwings, Hawfinches, winter migrants at Gibraltar Point (1949-2017) and rare birds (eg Stilt Sandpiper) finders' reports.

8. Update on website

PE reported that AC had now taken responsibility for managing the website. However, the complexity of the software is proving a challenge. In his absence, AC provided a written update thanking club member and committee consultant Colin Casey for providing ongoing IT support. This had enabled him to update the front page and provide links for forthcoming events. However, AC noted that some members visiting the site are having a forum logging-on issue that needs to be addressed. PE said it was important that maintenance of the website should not be dependent solely on one individual. JWa felt the current website was not as user-friendly as its predecessor, and thus he no longer contributed to discussion threads.

9. Update on newsletter

PE was pleased that, under AC's editorship, monthly publication was proceeding smoothly. It seems that 250 members (about two-thirds of the membership) are downloading the newsletter when each edition is published. He thanked Chris Grimshaw for his sightings updates which are included in the newsletter as well as (daily) on the website. These sentiments were echoed in a written report from AC who added that the Google Docs for

receiving/processing copy was "working well" and that the 1st of each month was the target date for publication.

#### 10. Proposals for LBC gull workshop

A proposal from Brian Hedley, via AC, that the club might consider hosting a gull-identification workshop prompted favourable comments. However, it was difficult to assess how many members (and others) might be interested in attending. PH thought the LWT premises at Whisby would be too large if attendance were no more than 15 or so and that the classroom at Gibraltar Point might be preferable. PE said the proposal merited a more detailed report in the newsletter to assess the level of member interest.

#### 11. Update on proposed publication of county bird atlas

PE reported that illustrations had now been received for all the species. These included some line drawings supplied by AC, Ian Shepherd, Nick Tribe and others. The project is being undertaken by Colin Casey who has been notified accordingly.

#### 12. Update on new 40th-anniversary LBC stickers

PE expressed thanks to Neil Smith for contributing the design, further reporting that an order for 1000 had been fulfilled by Louth-based LincsPrint at a cost of £180 inc VAT. These will mostly be distributed with the next edition of the county bird report in spring. Committee members were impressed with the samples.

#### 13. Update on any other proposed LBC projects

a) PE outlined details of RSPB's national Willow Tit survey and said the club would put effort into supporting it and details would be in the January newsletter. The species is not faring well either nationwide (down to about 5,000 pairs) or in the county with its last surviving strongholds thought to be at Snipe Dales and in the Barton area (with up to four pairs apiece). JWa noted that WTs were not easy to detect, except by their callnote as with his last encounter at Snipe Dales.

#### 14. Officers' reports on items not previously covered on agenda

a) Chairman

i) PE said he had been unable to attend this year's annual GLNP conference in Lincoln. MH and JWr said they had attended. The theme was Natural Capital, and the speakers had been good.

ii) PE felt the club should give renewed consideration to funding the innovative Motus tracking system which monitors the movements of small migrants. He reported on a robin which had been tracked all 140 miles from the Netherlands across the North Sea to Suffolk. JWr noted that Spurn had enrolled in one of the pilot projects with a special interest in tracking the migration of yellow-browed warblers. PH said the Motus system promised greater effectiveness than conventional ringing whereby, for every 2000 birds ringed only one might be recovered. PE suggested potential Motus tracking locations could include one or more of the following - Gibraltar Point, RSPB Frampton, Grimsby Dock and Donna Nook.

#### b) Treasurer

JWa provided an update on income and expenditure as of 10/11/19. The club's balances remain healthy, largely thanks to ongoing data sales.

He noted that bank interest on the balance was just 0.02 per cent. Formerly, the club held some of its monies in a higher interest bond, but these now seem to have been withdrawn by club institutions for deposit accounts held by clubs such as LBC.

#### c) Secretary

Nothing additional to report

#### d) Membership secretary

Nothing additional to report

#### e) Sales secretary

BS said the slowdown in sales of annual bird reports was continuing, with just 13 so far this year compared with 32 for 2018. In 2012, the figure had been 114. The reasons for the decline are not well understood, but it may be that there is less appetite for material in physical form when so much is available, at no cost, online. PE queried if supplies at RSPB Frampton, a significant outlet, were being topped up. Publication of the report is a major cost for the club and PH favoured piloting making the reports' primary availability via pdf, thereby enabling annual membership subscription to be reduced to £5. (Those

members preferring the physical option would be able to exercise this by purchasing an additional print on-demand copy). JWa favoured retaining the present system. MH queried what systems were favoured by other county bird clubs. BS recalled that Colin Casey had suggested it might be possible to engage a sales agent, but JWr was not aware of any potential contact. PH noted that Rare Bird Alert was offering Norfolk bird reports at a discounted rate and wondered if its competitor organisation, Bird Guides might provide an outlet for surplus Lincolnshire reports.

#### f) County recorder

Since the resignation of John Clarkson as joint-recorder, PH has been processing records single-handed. He said he was "happy to jog on". James Siddle has agreed to become chair of the county rarities committee. PH said there was no need any longer to scrutinise descriptions of rare bird sightings if ample photographic evidence had already been posted on Twitter and other social media.

#### g) IT officer

In his written report, AC commented on his website/ newsletter/ 2018 bird report activities (see elsewhere in these minutes). He reported that the county council had offered to pay for six replacement barn owl boxes for the coastal grazing marshes scheme (JWa is liaising with AC on this and will invoice the council.) AC further stated that he now wished to stand down as LBC rep for two organisations - Woodland BAP and the Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union.

#### 15 Any other business

In response to a query from MH, it was noted that the hide at Manby Wetlands no longer existed. It has suffered the same vandalism fate as many others in the county. The landowner has made positive comments about reinstating the hide this winter.

#### 16. Next meeting

At Coach & Horses, Hemingby at 7.30pm on February 11, 2020.

*There being no further business, the chairman closed the meeting at 9.22pm.*