

Minutes of the Lincolnshire Bird Club AGM: March 23, 2021 (7.30pm)

Attendance

Phil Espin, Andrew Chick, Phil Hyde, John Watt, Mike Harrison, Jim Wright, Bill Sterling, Nick Tribe, Joy Croot, W. Glancy, Andrew Vaughan, Chris Grimshaw, Dan Bardsley, Nicholas Watt, Sian Niblo, Colin Casey, Clive Doubleday, Chris Gunn, Geoff Williams, Robert Oates, Richard Hazel, Geoff Mullet, David Bromwich, Tony Baker, Ian Gordon, Howard Gannaway, Steve Lister, Jacqui Harrison, Hugh Middleton.

Apologies for absence

John Badley, John Goy, Kev Wilson.

Minutes of the previous (2019) AGM

These were approved.

Matters arising

Robert Oates noted that his attendance at the 2019 had not been recorded. The chairman said the minutes would be amended accordingly.

Chairman's address by Phil Espin

Welcome everyone to our 40th AGM, following the postponement then cancellation of the 2020 event owing to Covid restrictions. The September issue of The Heron carried a quasi annual report with an address from me covering the period 1 Jan 2019 to 31st August 2020 and the annual accounts to 31 December 2019. The committee understand their constitutional obligations to hold an AGM and to be accountable to our members so we are pleased to have this Zoom event this evening. Many of us attended the joint LBC BTO conference in January and it was the success of that event that encouraged this experiment. I hope it works for us all.

Covid has now been with us a year and had a massive impact on all of us. The true horror of its impact was brought home to me and many of us last month by the death of Steve Keightley our highly regarded former County Recorder. Steve was a good friend to many and a well known regular at Frampton Marsh and Cut End. He will be greatly missed by his wife Sally, family, close friends and LBC members and as sign of our respect and affection I'd now like us to take one minutes silence to remember him and all those around the world who have suffered as Steve and his family have.

1 minutes silence.

Steve will be remembered in many ways, not least from his own birding legacy and as a first step the Club have taken the decision to rename the Cut End Hide, Steve Keightley Cut End Hide.

Despite these sad times, the ordinary business of the club continues. Yesterday the 2019 Bird Report was posted out and hopefully you will have it shortly. It carries a new design look as following our Horncastle based printer, Cupits going out of business last year we have switched to Swallowtail of Norwich who are well known for their Bird Reports. The cover remains the same and I look forward to your reactions to the changed internal design. The report carries a preface from our Honorary President, Professor Ian Newton reflecting on the role of bird clubs in the ornithological life of the nation. Once again the production of the report has been a

big team effort with thanks to everyone involved from all our members who submit their records in myriad forms to those involved in processing the records and the production of the report. This year I'd particularly like to thank Phil Hyde our county recorder who oversees the records collection process and the team of writers. Phil has had a very busy year for reasons I'll come on to in a moment and still delivered a fantastic new look bird report on schedule.

The other big event of the last few months has been the publication by the club of the first new Lincolnshire Avifauna for 32 years: *Birds of Lincolnshire*. The authorship team included Colin Casey, Phil Hyde, John Clarkson and myself and the project was delivered in just under 9 months from start to publication a fantastic achievement that built on several years of hard work by Colin and Phil revalidating our bird records database. I am not going to go on about it now but I am very happy to answer any questions you have on any aspect of it when I finish my address.

One of many positive outcomes of the book has been to see and hear of the genuine pleasure the book has brought to so many people. Another positive outcome has been the pre-publication offer to members which helped to boost our membership up from around 330 to 400 over the last 3 months. Some 257 members took part in the offer and the committee are very grateful to the membership for their support of the publication. In the March issue of *The Heron* we announced that one participant in the offer would win a copy of a limited edition print of the Pallas's Sandgrouse painting by Norfolk artist Nik Borrow which made such a striking cover to the book. The draw has been held and the lucky winner was Saltfleetby member Mike Tarrant. This is kind of spooky because Saltfleetby Dunes is the setting for the painting. Mike isn't with us tonight but we'll get the print to him as soon as we can.

Birds of Lincolnshire came hard on the heels of the Lincolnshire Bird Atlas from the same team so I think it's fair to say most of us are now booked out but not Colin. His capacity for hard work is insatiable and further works are in the pipeline of which more will be revealed in due course as ideas materialise. It's great to see the County getting such enthusiastic coverage and as Mark Avery commented in his excellent review of *Birds of Lincolnshire* let's hope the authors of the book are rewarded for their hard work by a Lincolnshire Pallas's Sandgrouse this year!

The Club is in a strong financial position which our Treasurer John Watt will mention when talking about our annual accounts a little later. That has enabled us to support 2 Peregrine webcams at St Wulframs Church Grantham and St James's Church Louth which will both be livestreamed through our website this spring. At the moment it looks like the Grantham pair may have shifted elsewhere but the Louth pair look as if they will lay any day. Hopefully this will give members something to focus on through what we hope will be the last few weeks of staying at home. The committee would like to thank Bob Sheppard and Alan Ball for their work at Grantham and Geoff Mullett for his work at Louth as well as the church authorities who have been so accommodating of these fine raptors and our interest in them. Last and by no means least Andrew Chick has put a lot of effort into making sure you get the pictures with technical back up from Colin Casey.

I am pleased to say all the officers and committee are continuing in their roles and there have been no nominations or motions received that require your attention this evening. The only change to the committee is a single new co-opted member Joy Croot from the north east of the county. Joy has joined us for 2 committee meetings

so far and is getting to understand what we do and will find a role over the coming months. I should add we are always open to new ideas and new committee members. Most of the committee already have their hands full and we are all volunteers. If anyone has good ideas about new directions the club might take by all means put them forward but please if you genuinely want to see them taken up why not join us and be prepared to take your idea forward yourself with our support.

Looking forward to this spring and summer the club is involved in several projects which we hope you'll support and get stuck into.

The RSPB Turtle Dove survey is taking place from mid May to July. Please sign up for a square to support the survey, even if you suspect that your local area has no Turtle Doves, the evidence you gather is helpful to RSPB in making conservation decisions that may impact on the return of this beautiful bird to areas it has been lost from. The Heron newsletter will carry details of signing up for a square in the April edition.

BTO are holding a Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows Survey this summer. Their website has full details on how you can help at www.bto.org. The BTO currently have a scheme for donors to pass unwanted optical equipment to youngsters here and in the third world. If you can help please do.

This June/July we again intend to support the Lincs Wildlife Trust effort to maximise the breeding success of shorebirds at Gibraltar Point. This will be with sponsorship cash and time, if you can volunteer your time for shore bird day time wardening or overnight duties that would be a great help. I spent a night on the point last July and it was an unforgettable experience.

Writing the sites section of Birds of Lincolnshire reminded me just how important LWT is to our birding lives. They manage 11 out of 20 of our top birding sites and I'd like to thank them for the important work they do without which the county would be a poorer place for birders.

Again more details of the Gib Point project will be in The Heron and thanks to Chris Grimshaw and Andrew Chick who have made our newsletter an even more vital part of the life of the club under lockdown.

In conclusion its been a difficult time for many of us but let's look forward to a great and bird filled spring.

Questions and comments from members

Jim Wright expressed appreciation of the picture by Nik Borrow of the Pallas's Sandgrouse on the front cover of *Birds of Lincolnshire* and asked for the circumstances surrounding its choice. PE said the dunes at Saltfleetby had provided the setting and the image of the bird was based on the last recorded UK (Shetland) sighting of the species. The sandgrouse was selected in preference to alternative species such as great bustard and yellow-breasted bunting of which, likewise, no contemporary photographs exist.

Comments/questions - from Mike Harrison, Robert Oates and others - were put about availability of the print of the Borrow painting. PE cautioned that a further

print-run might devalue the 20 already distributed as gifts to those who had contributed to publication of the book. Of these, the two still ungifted are due to be auctioned. John Watt said "devaluation" would depend on the price at which any additional prints might be sold.

Joy Croot asked how many women members the club had. PE said this was not known, but he estimated that it was between 5 - 10 per cent and growing.

JC further suggested the club should consider establishing links with swift conservation groups. PE and Colin Casey noted that individual members (notably the late Steve Keightley and his friend Barry Hancock) had secured protection for known swift nest-sites (for instance, at Helpringham) by lobbying local councils.

Ian Gordon asked for demographic details of club membership. PE said the club had a widespread membership across the county with notable concentrations in the west around Lincoln and north east Grimsby areas and more dispersed membership in the east, the southern fens and the north west

Ian Gordon, Steve Lister and others asked what initiatives were in prospect for Big Bird Day in May. Andrew Chick favoured a suggestion of May 8 to coincide with Global Bird Day. PE said this project was being overseen by Richard Doan and publicity would be given in the newsletter in due course.

Colin Casey reported that some 320,000 records had already been submitted for the 2020 bird report, with more due from Gibraltar Point and the BTO's WeBS scheme.

Jacqui Harrison urged the club to initiate 30-minute meet-and-greet sessions (preferably with a topic), via Zoom, to encourage new young members. Other ideas were submitted from Ian Gordon and others. It was thought that Lincoln University and county colleges might have student-birders unaware of the club. Phil Hyde thought Toby Carter, if he agreed, would be a good host for a youth-focused Zoom meeting. John Watt suggested that LBC might allow any university/college bird club to affiliate at "not too much cost". Robert Oates highlighted the Next Generation Birders website. IG noted that county clubs in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk had enjoyed large attendances to meetings held online in the wake of pandemic restrictions.

Robert Oates asked if heronry surveys would be resumed in the wake of eased lockdown restrictions. PE said the BTO had issued guidance that indicated travel to survey herons would be ok as long as social distancing rules are respected and no local sensitivities are breached.

Andrew Chick noted that Zoom might be more effective in attracting new committee members. PE said online meetings had significant advantages, for instance in saving travel time and expense, but he favoured at least one in-person summer committee gathering per calendar year.

Bill Sterling reported that complimentary copies of the 2019 bird report had been sent out. A further five would be posted to statutory library recipients when requested.

Nicholas Watt appealed for wader count volunteers at two sites on The Wash - Dawes Mere and Holbeach Marsh. Anyone interested should contact him or Jim Scott, the warden at RSPB Snettisham. He noted a continuing decline of shelduck and its reduction as breeder around The Wash because suitable insects were no longer available to feed the young. By way of contrast, PE commented that there had been exceptionally high winter counts on the Humber Estuary at Pyewipe, near Grimsby.

Presentation of the accounts

Treasurer John Watt provided an on-screen written report of the accounts for the year ending December 31, 2020, accompanied by an explanatory spoken commentary. He noted that, as of that date, club membership stood at 328 (179 ordinary, 112 senior and 37 family). The club is in a strong financial position with an end-of-year balance of £27,423.71. JWa thanked Steve Bartlett for auditing club accounts, unpaid, for the past two years. Following resolutions, the accounts were formally adopted and the auditor re-appointed.

Any questions to club officers

There were none. Jim Wright (secretary) said the committee would benefit, post-lockdown, from an events secretary and said an approach from any volunteer would be welcomed by the committee.

Election of officers/ committee members

All were re-elected en bloc.

Any other motions previously notified

None.

Any other business

John Watt expressed gratitude to the chairman for raising the profile of the club, especially over the past three years during which time the club has published two books. A unanimous vote of thanks was recorded. PE thanked JWa for his comments and said all that had been achieved was through a great team effort.

There being no further business, the chairman closed the meeting at 8.31pm.