

## **Minutes of Lincolnshire Bird Club meeting via Zoom 13 February 2024 at 19.30.**

### **1 Chairman's welcome**

Phil Espin welcomed the following to the meeting: Jon Cooper, Mike Harrison, Bill Sterling, Andrew Chick, Sally Prescott, Phil Porter, Pete Short, Jim Wright.

### **2 Apologies for absence**

Received from Phil Hyde.

### **3 Minutes of the meeting held on November 21, 2023 (as already posted on the LBC website)**

These were approved.

### **4 Matters arising**

a) PE reported that positive lines of communication had opened with Covenham Reservoir Water Sports Association re importance of minimal disturbance of waterfowl. At this stage, we will not be represented on the committee but this might be an option in future.

b) PE provided an update on this spring's inaugural curlews/ RAF airfields project involving LBC, Natural England and the RAF Ornithological Society. Access to Scampton - a site earmarked for temporary accommodation of asylum-seekers - has been obtained by Natural England through the Home Office. LBC has been allocated £6,000 by the MoD to cover the expenses of RAFOS surveyors. If this figure is underspent, the LBC will retain the balance for expenditure on the project. If it is overspent, there will be no requirement for us to subsidise the additional expenditure. PE and other club members, including Alan Ball, will be involved with the research. PE is having a further meeting at RAF Digby on February 28 to finalise survey arrangements. AC commended the project as very worthwhile.

c) Re. proposed interactive features at events, PE reported that he could contact someone who might be able to construct a portable hide that could consist of panels that can be unbolted and carried in the boot of a car. There would be viewing slots at different levels. We would then need to get background screen habitats to pin birds on. These could include agricultural, woodland and wetland scenes. He suggested the cost might be in the region of £300. This received unanimous committee support. JW agreed to seek a quote for purchase of a screen.

d) Kev Wilson of Gibraltar Point had provided a written update before the meeting following our award of a grant of £2,500 for data-input: "We have now completed collating all the data for Gib from the various sources for 2022 and this has all been input on Birdtrack. There may just be a few input errors for anyone writing the report – I'm happy to check any records that seem unusual."

### **5 Committee membership**

a) PE welcomed Pete Short of the RSPB who has agreed to provide the committee with occasional updates on significant developments at RSPB Tetney Marshes and other sites in

the Humber. He went on to provide a comprehensive report on Tetney Marshes, Read's Island, Witton Island, Winteringham Marshes and the recently acquired Island Farm. Between them, they have been providing a home for almost 100,000 birds over winter. The number might have been greater if significant numbers of golden plovers and lapwings had not relocated to Pyewipe. PS also reported on fund-raising progress and on development pressures such as proposed installation of wind turbines in shorebird-sensitive locations. He also highlighted ongoing issues with disturbance by dog-walkers, off-road motorcyclists and others at Tetney Marshes and expressed hopes that LBC members might be able to monitor incidents so that they could be reported to bodies such as Natural England and North East Lincolnshire Council/ East Lindsey District Council. He welcomed useful dialogue that was being achieved with Killinghome developer landowner Able, for instance in safeguarding East Halton marshes. He further commented on how the development of Grimsby-Mablethorpe section of the newly designated Coronation coastal reserve would need funding for it to be progressed as successfully as hoped.

b) PE updated LBC on installation of new Peregrine-monitoring camera equipment at St James Church, Louth. The new webcams have been installed last week and are up and running. The invoice has not yet been received. AC said the involvement of LBC needed to be acknowledged in any publicity. AC added that a pair of Peregrines were prospecting St Wulfram's Church in Sleaford - another site where LBC has monitoring equipment

## **6 Update on public liability insurance - date due/ premium**

JC noted that our current insurance expires on March 19. He had explored different options. The third party premium increases significantly if cover is required for children or vulnerable adults. MH cautioned against paying excessive premiums. PE maintained comprehensive third party cover was essential. PS said he would seek input from Spurn Bird Observatory about their arrangements and PE said he would speak with Matthew Capper of LWT. PP said he would take soundings from colleagues on LNU. Note: This item will probably need to be delegated to PE and JC for a decision in advance of the renewal date.

## **7 Guidance note on responding to approaches made to the club for making grants/donations**

In the absence of a formal policy, JW suggested the following draft: "On receipt of an application made in writing, the club committee will consider awarding grants to individuals and or organisations for suitable projects where there is a) clear and obvious benefit to birds and birding activities and b) a specific link with Lincolnshire."

PE noted that this was already our procedure though in unwritten form.

Members agreed to revisit the suggestion, possibly with amended wording, at the next committee meeting.

## **8 Events**

a) SP reported that the winter event at South Ormsby Estate (January 20) this had been successful. It is hoped her report will appear in the March edition of *The Heron* newsletter.

b) Annual meeting of LBC

To confirm that this will be held at Whisby Education Centre at 2pm on Saturday March 23, 2024, when raptor expert Tim Mackrill will talk on the work of the Roy Dennis Foundation in respect of the return of White-tailed Eagle to England.

Agenda items for AGM will include i) proposed subscriptions increase, ii) election of officers and iii) motions (if any) from members.

AC agreed to include the agenda in the March newsletter.

JW agreed to look into supplying name badges for distribution to attendees.

c) JW reported that Cairngorms break (May 1-5, 2024) was now fully booked.

d) SP reported that Richard Doan, LWT's Coast and Wash Assistant Warden had agreed to lead a summer migrant walk at Gibraltar Point between 7.30am-10.30am on Saturday May 11. This is a free walk, but please note that purchases within the Visitor Centre will need to be paid for independently. Also car parking, which is £5 for more than two hours. Meet in the Visitor Centre car park. Numbers will be limited to 20 on a first come, first served basis. Target birds include a range of warblers, Cuckoo, sandpipers, possibly stints and flycatchers, Whimbrel on passage, with other less common migrants perhaps depending on tide and weather conditions. Bookings to Sally at Tel.01472 840142/ email: [Sally.prescott142@btinternet.com](mailto:Sally.prescott142@btinternet.com)

e) JW asked if there might be scope for the LBC to host indoor meetings additional to the AGM. SP noted that these were already frequently held by branches of the LWT and RSPB, but she remained open to suggestions if there was sufficient interest/demand from LBC members.

f) JW noted that the club had received an invitation to take a 3m x3 m stand within a marquee at the Festival of the Seas exhibition at Riverhead Square in Grimsby on June 22 (11am to 5pm). This aim is to celebrate Grimsby's relationship with the sea. Following comments from members, he agreed to investigate further.

g) SP felt that most recent outdoor walks had been in the north of the county and felt more could be organised in the south. She agreed to follow up a suggestion from MH that an approach might be made to Nick Watts for a visit to Vine House Farm in Deeping St Nicholas.

## **9 Memorials for deceased LBC members**

a) To consider posthumous life membership to Nicky Clarkson, wife of former county recorder (north) so that she can retain contact with the club. PE noted that there was a similar arrangement with Sally Keightley, wife of Steve Keightley. This was approved.

b) To consider whether the club should approve/part-finance installation of physical memorials: a) at Witham Mouth (Steve Keightley and Colin Casey) and b) Rimac (John Clarkson).

Members acknowledged that this was a sensitive subject involving issues of a) setting precedents b) criteria for supporting physical memorials (such as benches) for deceased club members and c) responsibility for ownership/maintenance of such memorials. No proposal was made on adopting a written policy/ guidelines and the matter may be re-considered at a future meeting.

## **10 National Grid's proposed pylon route from Grimsby to Walpole via Lincolnshire ([nationalgrid.com/g-w](http://nationalgrid.com/g-w) )**

SP reported on her attendance at a consultation event in North Thoresby

AC agreed to investigate the NG proposal and to contribute a news item to the March edition of *The Heron* newsletter.

PE said he would consider signing off a formal response subject to something with appropriate wording being proposed.

## **11 Reports from officers**

### **a) Chairman**

Many of PE's notes are covered higher in the minutes, but to these he added the following.

#### **i Lincolnshire Species Recovery Group**

On 22 November I attended an inaugural meeting of the above at Ceres House, Lincoln. There were about 30 people there from all kinds of interests. It was an interesting morning and I subsequently provided a wide list of bird species that I thought might be worth considering for discussion and prioritisation from a much larger list that Charlie Barnes of GLNP had produced. Not heard anything further about that or a follow up meeting. It was useful to hear about Wilder Doddington and the Boothby rewilding project at the meeting which piqued my interest.

#### **ii Meeting with LWT and LNU**

On 18 December I met with Matthew Capper of LWT and Nick Tribe of LNU at Whisby. The meeting was discuss how our organisations are doing and what mutual support we might offer each other. Main take aways were that LNU are struggling to recruit active officers to run the Union. LWT are interested in working with us at events of all kinds and our members helping out leading walks on their reserves was mentioned as a possibility. Will try and respond positively to any asks made.

### iii) Rewilding Projects

When an opportunity arose to visit Wilder Doddington through an approach made by Isobel Wright the project director to Phil Hyde we took it and visited on 19 December. It was fascinating to hear about their plans and their need for volunteer birders to help their work which we supported as in January newsletter. We donated them a copy of BoL and LBR 2021 and they were thrilled. We then went for a walk and relocated their Great Grey Shrike which had been seen by a single observer a week earlier, they were even more thrilled by the publicity they got from that. I met Lorraine Whittle the manager at Boothy Rewilding on 22 Nov (above) and have arranged to visit their site on March 12th, hopefully Ian Newton who is a patron of their project will be there too. I've also made contact with Hannah Wren at Wild Wrendale and will be visiting them sometime in spring. I think these initiatives are important for birds in Lincs and we need to keep close to them, support them and help them record their growing bird populations and get them in the bird report if we can.

### iv) Barry Clarkson

It was sad to hear of Barry's death on Boxing Day. A memorial walk/get-together is planned for him on Saturday 25th May. Anyone who knew and wishes to remember him will be welcome. Details later.

### v) Rare Breeding Birds Panel report

I spent all of January preparing the clubs RBBP report, gathering breeding data from members all over the county, and I am very grateful for their support. The report went in for January 31st. At the same time I wrote these species accounts for the 2022 LBR.

### vi) Great Northern Diver demise at Covenham

I don't normally bother with welfare cases of birds but I got involved with this one. Sadly the injured bird though captured and seemingly rehabilitated did not survive after release. I don't see this work as LBC's role but if members wish to pursue these kinds of issues we should support them where we can.

### vii) National Bird Club Chairmen's Forum

I am now getting email chains on various matters and am keeping a watching brief. Will report if anything seriously relevant arises.

### viii) Club secretary

Jim Wright has advised me that he wishes to stand down as Secretary at the end of this calendar year. Thank you Jim for giving us sufficient notice that you have no excuse not to find and groom your own replacement! Happily Jim would like to continue on the committee in a different role which will be determined. Jim has already done a stalwart job over the last six years which we all recognise and appreciate. Thank you Jim.

## **b) Treasurer**

JC provided an update on the club's finances in the form of 2023 accounts. This is posted elsewhere. The accounts will be audited on 16<sup>th</sup> February by our auditor SW Bartlett.

### **c) Secretary**

Most of the points that were to have been raised by JW have been addressed higher in the minutes.

He additionally noted that he had been advised that Adam Brown, of Dogma Art, has applied to the Arts Council to fund murals of 'gulls' at various locations (such as the wall of the leisure centre) in Cleethorpes. He is calling it the 'Seagull Trail'. Mr Brown has not responded to JW's request for further information.

### **d) IT manager/ webmaster/ *The Heron* newsletter editor**

In response to criticism from correspondent Mr Neill Thomson about the 'clunky' and 'hostile' nature of our website, AC acknowledged that a review would be timely. He said he would prepare an analysis and submit proposals about options and costs to the next committee meeting in July. JA agreed to reply to Mr Thomson, thanking him for his input.

### **e) Sales Secretary**

BS has supplied this update on sales:

My Sales Report only covers those that I have actually sent out, almost all the sales being generated by LBC Website Sales page. I only ever have a few telephone or postal requests coming directly to me using cheques.

**Sales totals so far for 2024** Publications - 3 BoL + 2016 & 2021 ARs Keys - 1 Cut End Hide

**Latest Annual Report 2021 – only 3 sold (so far)** - poor but may be reflective of a larger membership.

### **Publications Sold 5**

**Sales** - Monies Received £137.20

**Free Gratis** None

**Free Gratis** (Postage Costs) None

**Postage rates** are now £2.80 for Annual Reports to reflect new actual costs to the club.

**Stock levels** are as follows – Thanks for the support in reducing the numbers – mostly given away at events.

Birds of Lincolnshire – 9

Bird Atlas - 11 please note 5 put aside for National Libraries when they request them

2021 AR - 58

2020 AR - 30

2019 AR - 22

2012 AR - 22

1996 AR - 13

1991-5 SoBiL - 13

1997-9 R&S - 19

2000-2 R&S - 31

All other publications held are fewer than 10.

Hoping to reduce the above numbers to single figurers during the year at meet-the-public events.

#### **f) Membership secretary**

MH reported that 20 new members had joined the club since the last committee meeting in November - mostly over Christmas and the New Year. A hitch involving one member's payment by cheque had been resolved. He passed on the sad news that William Learoyd, the father of LWT's chief executive, Paul Learoyd, had died.

#### **g) County recorder**

PH provided this written report:

i) Re 2022 annual report: Writing is progressing well with the majority of species in the systematic list completed. A quote for printing the report has been received from Swallowtail Print (Norwich) and circulated to the committee, which looks to be acceptable.

APC, PAH, PE, and V. Fleming have made good headway with the systematic list and aim to complete by the end of February. APC has produced an extended account of Redshank to include some breeding survey work.

Articles received for inclusion so far are as follows:

Common Buzzard migration at Gibraltar Point, Aug 28th, 2022.

European Roller at Timberland Fen.

Marsh x Sedge Warbler hybrid at Marston STW.

Observations of breeding Hobby's in north Lincolnshire.

Nest Recording in Lincolnshire.

AC has sorted most of the photographs. The provisional front cover photograph is of a juvenile Cuckoo by the late John Clarkson.

ii) Re LBC Records Committee: Nothing substantial to report, continues successfully. All LBRC submissions are in for 2023, and all but 4 of the 30 BBRC submissions for 2023 have been submitted too. Four late submissions from 2022 yet to be adjudicated on by BBRC.

iii) Re BBRC and county recorder Zoom meeting, January 17, 2024: Louise Bacon, the new secretary, opened the meeting with a short PP presentation outlining the BBRC's work and processes:

1) The committee is split roughly into 5 from the north and 5 from the south of the UK and average about 10 years of service each.

2) Straightforward submission may be circulated to only half of the committee.

3) Voting – acceptance requires a unanimous vote. All members see each other's comments.

4) Not Proven records are dealt with by the Chairman.

5) Taxa – full details on BBRC website. Louise mentioned some problem groups including the Subalpine Warbler group, Fea's group of petrels, hybrids (Pallid x Hen Harrier, Black Duck/ Mallard), intergrades in the Yellow Wagtail group, and rare subspecies of common birds, e.g. BB Dipper and Dark-breasted Barn Owl.

1.6 County recorder input:

1.6.1 extremely useful in the cases of returning rarities, especially where they move between sites and counties, and update on the final date of stay.

1.6.2 aging – biggest black hole in submissions. BBRC uses the calendar year notation, i.e. 1CY, 2CY, 2CY+, unless it is a very long-lived bird.

1.6.3 observer attributions – convention to publish records with a maximum of 3 names and where there are more/many to use 'et al'.

A county recorder can always provide an opinion on a record, ask for a copy of any submission sent or proved BBRC with any other relevant information.

The meeting then proceeded to an open Q&A session though avoiding specific 'cases'. Most interest was around the various BBRC and BOU reviews, and to speed of processing as follows:

1.7 Isabelline/Red-tailed Shrikes – review not started.

1.8 Subalpine Warbler group – review not started

The features of these two species groups are felt to be inadequately defined as there is much overlap and hence no solid ground on which to base ID of historic records.

1.9 Eastern Stonechats (Siberian and Amur) – review due to be started as field ID features are felt to offer a resolution.

1.10 Ruddy Shelduck status – in progress with the BOU with regard to which category records are placed (presumably one of the sub-categories of Category C).



1.11 Other pending reviews – ‘mixed singing’ Iberian Chiffchaffs; Yelkouan Shearwaters – likely to be lumped with Mediterranean Shearwaters..

1.12 Other reviews – these are awaiting input from other expert groups, e.g. IOC.

1.13 Speed of acceptance – entirely dependent on the speed of each of the 10 members and when they vote. Hard to control, but Louise is intending to issue four Work In Progress (WIP) files each year in which the status of submissions is indicated. Accepted records have status ‘OK’ and can be published in advance of the October annual report.

iv) LBC Database

Jon Cooper has done a very successful summary of the 2022 data which is on a Google sheet for myself, PE and any other writers to access. The majority of LBRC records for 2023 have been assessed and archived, and most of the 2023 BBRC records to date have been submitted. Missing BBRC submissions are being chased.

v) Lincs List website – update of records. 2022 records accepted by LBRC and BBRC have been added, for the most part.

## **12 Any other urgent business**

AC has alerted us a BTO project which, over the next three years, aims to measure movements of individual short-eared owls that are to be tracked and tagged at 25 yet-to-be specified locations. The cost per tag is £2,000. There are substantial other costs, and the whole project is set to cost £97,000. The BTO has not made any direct appeal to LBC but is seeking donors. PE suggested the club might be interested with the proviso that one of the birds is tagged in Lincolnshire and the club is provided regular updates on its whereabouts. MH noted that the species is notoriously nomadic. More details at: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/topics/tracking/tracking-studies/short-eared-owl-tracking>

## **13 Date, time and place of next meeting**

This will be held via Zoom at 7.30pm on July 23

There being no further business, the chairman closed the meeting at 9.59pm