

Minutes of the Oriental Bird Club 25th Annual General Meeting held at Le Strange Arms Hotel, Hunstanton, Norfolk on 31st October 2009

1. Attendance and apologies for absence. Approx 90 members were present.

Apologies had been received from Fergus Crystal, Paul French, Howard Ginn, John Gray, Tempe Mansfield, Geoffrey Munns, Colin Poole, David Porter, Tony & Celia Sawbridge, Ray Tipper, Sudhir Vyas, Michael Walters, Alan Wilkinson

2. Minutes of the 24th Annual General Meeting. The minutes of the 24th AGM held on 8th November 2008 were approved. Proposed: Steve Rowland, seconded by Nigel Collar.

3. Matters arising. There were no matters arising.

4. Chairman's Review of 2009.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to this special occasion, especially overseas members Axel Braúnlich, Jesper Hornskov and Liu Yang. He stated that it was customary for the Chairman to remind members of the three main objectives of the Club – to encourage an interest in the birds of the Oriental Region and their conservation, to promote the work of regional bird and nature societies and to collate and publish information on oriental birds. These have stood unchanged for 25 years and we see no need to amend them today.

The Chairman reported that members of Council had worked tirelessly for the Club during the last year. Council met four times (plus a short meeting at Birdfair to approve the 2008 Accounts), but much work went on quietly (and not so quietly) behind the scenes between meetings. Unfortunately Paul French decided that his other commitments and obligations meant that he had to resign from OBC Council, but he is still a great supporter of the Club and turned up at Birdfair to sell draw tickets for us. We welcomed Dave Buckingham as a co-opted Council member and he is now co-Chairman with Stephen Browne of the Conservation Committee.

The Chairman thanked all Council members for the time and effort they put in for the Club, but gave special thanks to Mike Edgecombe and Steve Rowland who had put together today's programme including the organisation for tonight's dinner.

Membership was again just over the magic 2000 figure, and today stood at 2041—2050 was now within our grasp—not bad in view of the worldwide recession. For 2010 the ordinary membership subscription rate remained at £15. In these hard times the Club gave excellent value for money.

The Chairman hoped that members would agree that BirdingASIA had gone from strength to strength. He thanked Peter Creed our designer for his ability to make the best use of the space available in our publications. Two 128 page editions of BirdingASIA were being published to celebrate our 25th anniversary year. And although Forktail 25 was not the largest we have produced—in terms of content it was very exciting, with the report of a brand new bulbul from Laos. Some OBC members (in addition to the discoverers who are all members) had already seen this unusual bird.

Suhel Quader had stepped down as editor of Forktail due to pressure of work and family commitments—local conservation issues in India are taking up his spare time. We were at present looking for a replacement but special thanks went to Nigel Collar, manfully holding the fort until we can find a new editor.

The Chairman noted that Stephen, Dave and their team had continued to work on updating the way in which we allocate conservation fund monies. We were starting to focus on fewer longer term projects, where the conservation officers can be involved from inception to completion. Of course the conservation fund could not operate at all without the donations from sponsors and members, and the fundraising efforts of Council members and others. During 2009 we received cash support from Asia Ecological Consultants Ltd, WildWings, Rockjumper Bird tours, BirdtourAsia, Birdquest, sunbird and new sponsor Asian Adventures. In addition London Camera Exchange again donated a Canon camera to the Club as first prize for the annual draw. Selling draw tickets was hard work at Birdfair this year, so we were very pleased that members' contributions were similar to last year. Special thanks to Jesper Hornskov whose two fund raising trips this year had raised over £2,000. James Goodhart had again given the Club great support—funding 4 projects this year.

The Chairman thanked Krys Kazmierczak for his untiring work on the Oriental Bird Images database. The last few weeks have seen quite a number of new species added—maybe we will succeed in getting images of all the species in Asia on the database!

The Club had once again had a stand at Birdfair – this year we had a ‘new look’ to celebrate our 25 years. We gave three regionally orientated talks during the 3 days, and ‘Call my Ruff’ was again as popular as ever. The Chairman finished by thanking everyone for coming to the meeting today – he hoped everyone would enjoy the remainder of the day, and he was those sure that those who were staying on for the evening would have a great time!

5. Presentation of 2008 Accounts

The Treasurer presented the 2008 accounts. These include a detailed review of the Club’s activities. He stated that the accounts had been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice ‘Accounting and Reporting by Charities’.

The Accounts showed a surplus of £4,206 compared with the surplus of £9,716 in 2007. He showed a slide showing the make-up of the surplus, and explained that full details were included in the detailed Report and Accounts available to members. In summary, the Club was in a very good state of health. The Treasurer asked if there were any questions relating to the Accounts.

Two questions were raised – firstly was a surplus on the Accumulated Fund of £31,000 necessary, and would it be better to transfer £20,000 of this to the Conservation Fund? After discussion, Richard Grimmett proposed that Council should look into this suggestion. The proposal was seconded by Roger Hughes and agreed by members present.

Council were also asked if the Club membership annual fee was too low at £15pa. In discussion it was explained that the growth in membership was coming from within the Region, where £15 for many people was a greater cost in terms of proportion of income. It was also pointed out that there was nothing to stop members who thought the membership fee too small making a donation to the club on top of the subscription – this money would go direct into the conservation fund. Dick Filby suggested that Council could consider a new level of membership – Conservation member. The Membership Secretary agreed to look into this valuable suggestion. The Treasurer then asked members to approve the 2008 accounts. Proposed by Margaret Sykes, seconded by Nigel Redman and approved unanimously.

6. Election of Council

The motion that Council members as listed on the Agenda should be elected was proposed by Ann Lawson, seconded by Chris Galey and approved unanimously.

7. Election of Country Representatives

The motion that Country Representatives as listed on the Agenda should be elected was proposed by Brian Sykes, seconded by Martin Woodcock and approved unanimously.

8. Election of Independent Examiner

Frances Clark was willing to stand for re-election as the club’s Independent Examiner. Her election was proposed by Margaret Sykes, seconded by Nigel Collar and approved by the members present.

9. Any Other Business

A member asked if there were any plans to produce an updated and revised edition of the OBC Checklist. Krys Kazmierczack informed the meeting that a draft new version of the Checklist had just been added to the Oriental Bird Images website, and he invited members to visit the site. Comments on the Checklist would be welcome and should be directed to the email address given on the site.

There was no further business and the Chairman closed the 25th AGM.

Margaret Sykes – Acting Secretary.