

Minutes of Oriental Bird Club 30th Annual General Meeting held at the Flett Theatre, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London, on Saturday 22nd November 2014

1. Apologies for absence

There were 47 members present. Apologies had been received from Charles Anderson, Vicki Harley, Colin Heap, Jesper Hornskov, Alf King, Clive Mann, David Melville, Doug Radford, Matthew & Debbie Rodgers and Dave Showler.

2. Approval of minutes of 29th Annual General Meeting

The minutes of 29th AGM held on 16th November 2013 were approved. Proposed by C. Gooddie, seconded by G Spinks and approved unanimously.

3. Matters arising

None

4. Treasurer's presentation of 2013 Accounts

Colin Humpage presented the 2013 accounts. A summary of the income and expenditure for the year was given. The accounts showed a deficit of £7,233 (surplus of £3,955 in 2012). This was due to an excess of expenditure over income on the Bertram Smythies Fund of £12,770 (surplus of £1,590 in 2012); project grants totalling £23,022 were made during the year, income was £10,252. The Accumulated Fund had a surplus of £3,555 (surplus £1,061 in 2012). The Conservation Fund showed a surplus of £1,664 (surplus £1,010 in 2012). Conservation Grants of £14,587 were awarded during the year. The fund receipts totalled £15,409 made up of donations, corporate sponsorship, income from prize draws and Gift Aid tax refund.

In summary the Oriental Bird Club finances continued to be healthy. The Club's cash balances are invested in low risk short term deposits so that funds may be accessed relatively quickly. The ongoing strong financial position means that subscription rates will be unchanged in the short term. The Chairman thanked the Treasurer.

5. Approval of 2013 Accounts

Kay White proposed approval of the 2013 accounts, seconded by Brian Sykes and approved unanimously.

6. Election of Independent Examiner

It was recommended that Frances Clark be re-elected as Independent Examiner and this was proposed by Chris Gooddie, seconded by Margaret Sykes and approved unanimously.

7. Chairman's review of 2014

This AGM completed Mike Edgecombe's first year as Chairman of the Club having been on council for 14 years. Thirty years was yet another milestone and he wondered how many of our founder members would have thought that the Club would still be playing such a strong role in Asian Ornithology. This was testament to the hard work and dedication of the past members of Council, many of whom continued to support the Club today. He was aware that for the Club to go forward, Council had to work hard, look to the future and adapt to the needs of the members whilst taking a proactive position in establishing firmer links with the growing interest in ornithology within the Region.

The Chairman stated that he firmly believed that the publications were very much the life blood of the Club and the Publications Committee deserved a big thank you for keeping up the very high standards we had set ourselves. Council were quite rightly proud of this. It was most satisfying to see the acclaim each issue received from our members. The one drawback from producing such a high quality publication was that inevitably this took longer and for the second year running we were not able to produce *Forktail* for distribution at Birdfair, but he was pleased to report that *Forktail* 30 was now ready for the printers. The Chairman stated that he would not want anyone to think for one moment that this delay was a result of slacking Council members. Conversely it was exactly the opposite and he was very aware of the immense amount of time Brian and Margaret Sykes and members of the Publications committee devote to this. Nigel Collar yet again had stepped up to the mark and helped Brian immensely. They all received his sincere thanks. As well as the core members of the publications team thanks went to René Pop, John Eaton and to Peter Creed, whose skill as our designer had solved many a problem for us once again.

Both issues of *Birding Asia* will again be well over 100 pages. Brian again had been the key mover in producing these with Simon Roddis playing an important role with the editing. The Chairman had every confidence that the publications would continue to go from strength to strength. He then appealed for help with the publications. The work was demanding and if there was anyone with editing or proof reading skills who could contribute a little of their time they were asked to please come forward.

The Club's presence in other forms of media continued to grow. OBI was another hugely important OBC asset. It now included over 90,000 photographs of 2558 species by 1,422 photographers. OB currently had 2,492 members & OBpix 779. We now had over 6,000 followers on Facebook – the number more than doubled in the

last 12 months. What was disappointing was that very few had joined the club as a result of this connecting to a wider audience via social media. We still had to learn how to convert even a few of them to paid-up members!

Membership was only slightly down on last year and given the on-going global financial restraints, together with the rise in the availability of information on the internet, this was not unexpected. However Council would continue to work hard at promoting the Club and the Chairman was confident that we could sustain a good membership level in the years to come. The Club represented very good value for money and with the quality of publications remaining consistently high, our level of membership retention compared very favourably with what we heard from others organisations.

At British Birdfair we took £1,284 (£1,543 in 2013) in Prize Draw sales over the three days, and in total the draw made £2,363, a figure very similar to the last two years, for the Conservation Fund. The draw ran with four main prizes of approximately equal value, which seemed to work well. The Chairman thanked LCE, John Gregory, Borneo Nature Tours and Strix Editions for the main prizes, and Lynx Edicions and John Beaufoy Publishing for the remaining prizes. The Bagh draw was again a good incentive in getting people to buy 5 tickets; Raj & Arjun Singh were thanked for their continuing support. The Chairman gave a special thank you to Giles and Renee Braithwaite and Tempe Mansfield for all their hard work on the stand and reminded members that we were indeed very reliant on trusty volunteers.

Our Bird Brain contestant Chris Goodie came second, and the Conservation Fund benefitted by £500. Although visitor numbers were down and one could argue that the stereotypical visitor to Birdfair may have changed in recent years, we were pleased to see a good number of young birders attending. The Chairman and Chris Goodie spent some constructive time talking to some of them and promoting the OBC to this next generation of birders. For the Chairman a highlight of Birdfair was the inaugural OBC drinks reception held on the Saturday. Over 40 members, friends and corporate sponsors joined Council members for delicious oriental snacks, kindly donated by Jane Whitaker. John Gregory and the Chairman donated the drinks and numerous bottles of the infamous Beer Lao were enjoyed by those attending. As always it was great to see so many members during the fair, particularly those from overseas.

The Chairman thanked all our sponsors – AEC, Limosa, Birdquest, Sunbird, Rockjumper, BirdtourAsia, Birding Ecotours and WildWings. Jesper Hornskov has yet another successful year raising money for OBC and his contribution to funds over the years was remarkable. Yann Muzika generously continued to provide the funds to support Sayam Chowdhury's work in Bangladesh. Other individual members had yet again been staggeringly generous and provided us with significant donations and for these we were extremely grateful.

The Chairman thanked Dave Buckingham and his Conservation Committee who worked quietly in the background, patiently sorting out grant applications and helping successful applicants make the most of the grants they receive. This year has seen further strengthening of the team with at the addition of Toby Galligan, Joe Taylor and Jacquie Weir.

The OBC 'conservation tours' scheme operated to Qinghai with two trips organised by Jesper and our Bhutan tour with Birding Ecotours had two departures scheduled for 2015. Further tours were being finalised with other corporate sponsors and he thanked all those companies who were happy to engage with this scheme.

OBC relied heavily on volunteers and the Chairman thanked those who supported the club in many ways. He specifically mentioned our overseas helpers – Bob Kennedy (USA), Fon Intravooth & Phil Round (Thailand), Paul Leader (Hong Kong), Paul Thompson (Bangladesh), Nyein Chan (Myanmar) and Deepal Warakagoda (Sri Lanka). They together with the UK team all helped to make OBC run smoothly.

Finally, the Chairman thanked all his fellow council members for the time and energy they put into the Club; he said that being a part of Council was very worthwhile and great fun and it was immensely rewarding being part of such a successful Club celebrating its 30th year. If any member felt they would like to help in any way there are always openings to join Council. Special skills were not needed but passion and enthusiasm went down well.

8. Election of 2015 Council

Council proposed the election of Chris Goodie; all other Council members offered themselves for re-election. It was proposed by Ann Duff, seconded by Richard Grimmett and approved unanimously that Chris Goodie be elected to Council and all other Council members (as listed on the Agenda) be re-elected.

9. Any Other Business

There was no further business and the Chairman declared the 30th OBC AGM closed.

Jo Thomas, Secretary