

Minutes of Oriental Bird Club 35th Annual General Meeting held at The Fairstead, Cley-next-the-Sea, Holt, Norfolk NR25 7RJ on Saturday 21st September 2019

1. Apologies for absence

70 members were present. Apologies were received from Keith Betton, David Fisher, John Geeson, Krys Kazmierczak, Doug Radford, Matthew and Debbie Rodgers, Brian and Margaret Sykes and Jo Thomas.

2. Approval of minutes of 34th Annual General meeting

The minutes of the 34th AGM held on 22nd September 2018 were approved. Proposed by John Eaton, seconded by Tony Sawbridge and approved unanimously.

3. Matters arising.

There were no matters arising.

4. Treasurer's presentation of 2018 accounts

Mike Edgecome, Treasurer, presented the 2018 accounts, copies of which were available at the meeting. The Club generated an overall surplus of £7,701 for the year. Total reserves at 31 December 2018 were £207,409, of which £153,761 were unrestricted reserves.

The Club received donations to the Conservation Fund totalling £3,800 during the year from seven regular Corporate Sponsors – AEC, BirdtourASIA, Birdquest, Limosa, Rockjumper Birding Tours, Sunbird and WildWings. In addition, we received a donation of \$23,000 (2017 - \$23,000) from the March Conservation Fund in the USA. This money is remitted to us by means of a grant from the Tides Foundation.

The Club also received donations and legacies from members and others exceeding £4,000 in total, which helped support the Conservation Fund and Honorary Membership Fund. The Grand Prize Draw raised a net total of £2,176 and Ashly Banwell again represented the OBC in the *Bird Brain of Britain* competition held at the British Birdfair and came in second place. The Club received £500 as a result of his efforts. Both sums boosted the Conservation Fund.

Membership of the Club on 31 December 2018 stood at 1,895 (2017 – 1,974), including 171 (2017 - 170) Honorary Members, funded from contributions to the Honorary Membership Scheme. The continued generous support of our Business Supporters and Supporting Members raised £1,380 (2017 - £1,512) in donations and has enabled the number of Honorary Members to be maintained.

The value of Gift Aid tax refunds from UK subscriptions and donations was £2,168 and continues to be a vital additional source of income.

An exchange rate gain of £436 (2017 - loss of £149) arose on the retranslation of the Club's overseas cash balances in the USA, India and Thailand to sterling at year-end.

Bank interest of £1,820 (2017 - £1,406) has been earned in the year, the majority of which is accrued income on the Club's £85,000 one-year deposit with Shawbrook Bank (invested via the Charities Aid Foundation). Most of the remaining cash is held in the Club's Lloyds Bank deposit account. The Club's investment policy will continue to focus on low risk short-term deposits.

The cost of *Forktail 34* was 29% lower than last year. It was a smaller, 80-page issue (2017 - 138 pages). The two editions of *BirdingASIA* were 128 pages each, resulting in overall costs 4% less than last year.

Council awarded 12 (2017 – 10) conservation grants amounting to around £21,000 during the year. The Accumulated Fund (representing OBC operating income and costs) generated a small surplus of £2,080 (2017 - deficit of £684), largely due to changes in the publishing costs of *Forktail*.

The Smythies Fund, an unrestricted designated fund, generated a surplus for the year of £977 (2017 - deficit of £10,217) and had a balance of £113,884 at 31 December 2018.

The Conservation Fund showed a surplus for the year of £7,169 (2017 - surplus of £9,997). Income was lower, at £9,768 (2017 - £13,736). Council approved the transfer of £600 to the Conservation Fund from the Accumulated Fund (2017 - £700), representing sums raised from the sales of leech socks and other garments, together with the Club's publications.

Further funding of \$23,000 or £16,791 (2017 - £17,401) for our conservation work was received via the Tides Foundation from the March Conservation Fund. This enabled £18,986 (2017 - £11,796) to be awarded in grants from the OBC-March Conservation Fund. The fund showed a deficit for the year of £2,195 (2017 - surplus of £5,605) and a year-end balance of £6,206, which was awarded to grant recipients in early 2019.

Spoon-billed Sandpiper fund has been maintained as we foresee further financial activity supporting not only WWT's work but also our colleagues at BCST with their work on developing the recently-acquired wintering site at Pak Thale, Thailand.

The Club's underlying finances continue to operate at roughly break-even, with the Accumulated Fund showing a balance of £39,877 at the year-end.

Mike thanked Graeme Spinks who, although not on Council, plays a pivotal role in managing the finances of the club and advising Council on technical matters relating to finance. We are indebted to him.

5. Approval of 2018 Accounts

The 2018 accounts were approved. Proposed by Chris Gooddie, seconded by Nigel Redman and approved unanimously.

6. Approval of Independent Examiner

Frances Clark was re-elected as Independent Examiner. Proposed by Steve Rowland, seconded by David Walsh and approved unanimously.

7. Chairman's review of 2018

Club Chairman John Gregory gave his review of the year and explained important changes which will shortly be made.

Two issues of BirdingASIA were published but the 2018 issue of Forktail was delayed, coming out in July 2019. A new editor has been appointed for Forktail, Professor Frank Rheindt, and the intention is to bring Forktail back on track by the end of 2020. The Club is also exploring sustainable (not just recyclable) packaging for its publications, a subject which has been raised by members and one which the Club is keen to address.

The Club is also making a move to put its publications online, in tandem with a revised subscription package. This will bring the Club into line with the other Regional Societies and aligns us with developments in academic publishing, as well as reducing our use of paper. Digital back issues of BirdingASIA and newer Forktails are all now available for instant purchase through website. Anything over 3 years old is available for free download. The impact of these changes on subscriptions—which have not been raised for 18 years—are nil for Digital Only membership and around £5 for Digital and Paper. Eight different membership options will be available, including a new £12 option for students and under-privileged individuals, via a newly re-launched website, courtesy of the efforts of Richard Thomas. In parallel, the Club will be moving away from Standing Order payments to Direct Debit.

Council does see a small financial upside to going digital through the subscription increase and reduction in postage and paper costs. Council also sees financial headwinds as well as opportunities to invest more actively in conservation. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find 'volunteers' for the 'heavy lifting activities' of the club, in particular editors for our publications (ABC and NBC both have paid managing editors) and to support conservation. The Club wishes to become more active at the forefront of conservation given the desperate plight of some of the region's critically endangered

species. We also hope to invest in young scholars, conservationists and birdwatchers in the region, thereby helping to grow an interest in biodiversity from the grass roots level as well as to diversify our membership base away from Europe. And the widely acclaimed Oriental Bird Images website is becoming more and more difficult to support from volunteers or at charity rate prices.

Grants were made to a number of projects from the Club's Conservation Fund. It is believed that the Club has now awarded more than £500,000 of grants.

We attended the UK Birdfair as usual. The Annual Prize Draw raised over £2,500 for the Conservation Fund through sales of raffle tickets. We are grateful to prize donors, in particular for the support again of Swarovski UK. Mike Edgecombe spoke for us in the 'Best Ever Days—the World Series' event and achieved the biggest round of applause of all the speakers. Billy Rodger represented the Club in the Birdbrain contest and won £250 for the Conservation Fund. In a new initiative, a limited edition Blue Pitta pin badge went on sale.

The Club also attended Migfest at Spurn Bird Observatory, Yorkshire, in September, and a year's OBC membership was donated as part of the award to the Martin Garner Young Birder of the Year.

Finally, John thanked our corporate sponsors, whose continuing support is very much appreciated.

Terry Townsend welcomed the proposed changes and the involvement of Ding Li Yong and Frank Rheindt, based in the region.

8. Election of 2019 Council

It was proposed that the following members be re-elected to Council: Dave Buckingham, Mike Edgecombe, Chris Gooddie, John Gregory, Tim Loseby, Simon Roddis, Billy Rodger, Tony Sawbridge, Jo Thomas, Richard Thomas and Lisa Whiffin. Proposed by Steve Rowland, seconded by Chris Balchin and approved unanimously.

Ding Li Yong, Alex Berryman and Drew Lyness, co-opted onto Council in 2018, stood for election onto Council. Proposed by David Walsh, seconded by Terry Townsend and approved unanimously.

The following Council members have agreed to stand for re-election as Executive officers:

John Gregory - Chairman

Chris Gooddie – Vice Chairman

Mike Edgecombe – Treasurer

Jo Thomas – Secretary

All proposed by Steve Rowland, seconded by Nigel Redman and approved unanimously.

9. Any Other Business

There was no further business and the Chairman declared the 35th OBC AGM closed.

Simon Roddis, pp. Jo Thomas (Secretary)