

Minutes of Oriental Bird Club 33rd Annual General Meeting held at St John the Evangelist Community Hall, Cambridge on Saturday 23rd September 2017

1. Apologies for absence

39 members were present. Apologies had been received from Chris Craig, Helena Craig, Mya Rose Craig, John Eaton, Vicki Harley and Richard Thomas.

2. Approval of minutes of 32nd Annual General Meeting

The minutes of 32nd AGM held on 29th October 2016 were approved. Proposed by Margaret Sykes, seconded by Steve Rowland and approved unanimously.

3. Matters arising

4. Treasurer's presentation of 2016 Accounts

Margaret Sykes, acting Treasurer, presented the 2016 accounts after urging members present to read through the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts for 2016 distributed at the meeting (the report was also available on the Club's website). The accounts showed a deficit of £3,413. This was made up as follows: deficits on the Bertram Smythies Fund of £4,341, the Conservation Funds £2,086 and the Honorary Membership Fund £100, reduced by a surplus of £3,114 on the Accumulated Fund.

The Club's net assets at 31 December 2016 totalled £195,195 (2015 - £198,608). In summary the Club finances continued to be healthy; the cash balances are invested in low risk short term deposits so funds may be accessed relatively quickly.

5. Approval of 2016 Accounts

The 2016 accounts were approved. Proposed by Chris Gooddie, seconded by Brian Sykes and approved unanimously. The Chairman thanked Graeme Spinks who continues to help considerably in the background and Margaret Sykes for all their hard work and expertise.

6. Election of Independent Examiner

Frances Clark was re-elected as Independent Examiner. Proposed by Margaret Sykes, seconded by Simon Roddis and approved unanimously.

7. Chairman's review of 2016

Mike Edgecombe, in his fourth term as Chairman, presented his report. This year had seen no changes to Council, except for welcoming back to the UK John Gregory from a long-term stay in Michigan.

Club publications always receive positive feedback and the three produced this year keep to these very high standards, so the Publications Committee once again deserves a big thank you. It is a demanding task to get these publications to print and yet again our sincere thanks to Brian and Margaret Sykes for their continued devotion to the task, together with Simon Roddis, Nigel Collar and others who freely give their time to the cause, including Phil Tizzard who is the newest member of the editorial team. Rene Pop and Tim Loseby are to be thanked for their help with illustrations, John Eaton with advertising and Peter Creed who continues to maintain high design standards.

OBI now holds over 136,125 photographs (an increase in 16,000 since this time last year) of 2937 species. In a typical week the site receives 5,600 unique users and 155,000 page views. Due to the huge work load to sort through images Krys Kazmerciak reports that India and Sri Lanka common species are well-covered so no more images of the common Indian and Sri Lankan species are required. He requests images from other parts of the region and especially for the 26 species for which we have no images. Our special thanks to Krys for the staggering amount of time he puts in to such a pivotal role in order to make OBI such a magnificent resource. Also thanks to Abhijit Menon-Sen, Rajneesh Suvarna, Richard Thomas and others for supporting Krys in what has been a challenging year.

If anyone with bird and IT skills would like to get involved with either OBI or the OBC website, please come forward as Richard and Krys would be most grateful for some assistance.

OBC currently has 1,948 members, the Oriental Birding email forum 2,500 subscribers, OBpix approx. 800, Facebook 12,000 followers and the number continues to grow. The OBC Twitter feed too has a steadily increasing number of followers, thanks to Simon Roddis.

Membership is about the same as last year and stands at 1,948 with renewals outstanding so it is hoped the figure will be 2000+ by the year end. We have continued to offer a Bursary Scheme, funded to date by individual Council committee members, to introduce the younger generation to the Club and hopefully ignite an interest in the Orient. Council will continue to work hard to promote the Club and we are confident we can sustain a good membership level in the years to come. We would like to urge more members to renew online or direct to the OBC bank account as this, and the notification of the AGM by email/publications, helps to save considerably on postage costs. Margaret Sykes was thanked for all her hard work on dealing with membership-related issues.

The OBC stand at Bird Fair continued to attract a lot of visitors. 12 new members were recruited. We show-cased some of the magical birds of the region on screen in video and still shots. The OBC prize draw ticket sales at the Bird Fair alone raised £1,488, an increase on last year and this provides a welcome boost to the Conservation Fund. We were immensely pleased to welcome new sponsor Swarovski Optic who donated a pair of 8x32 EL binoculars, which no doubt helped in our quest to increase ticket sales. Thanks also to John Gregory for donating a week's winter break in a cottage in Stiffkey, to John Gray for donating an original painting by Mark Chester and Lynx Edicions for providing some books for the remaining prizes. The Bagh draw was again a good incentive for people to purchase more than 5 tickets and thanks go to Raj and Arjun Singh for their continuing support. Ashley Banwell performed very well again as the OBC contestant in the Birdbrain event. We didn't scoop the top prize this year but Ashley's performance raised an extra £250 for the Conservation Fund for which we are very grateful. Another successful drinks reception was held with thanks to Tony and Celia Sawbridge, Jo, John and Jane for helping with the organisation and food. Our presence at Bird Fair wouldn't be possible without the continued help of Giles, Renee and Tempe along with other trusty volunteers who freely give their time.

The OBC Conservation Fund continues to fund worthwhile projects across the oriental region. 11 awards were made since the last AGM including one emergency grant award to assess the flood damage to a tiny relict population of Blue-crowned Laughingthrush in China and funds have been earmarked to support research into the Indonesian wild bird trade. Dave Buckingham, with the invaluable help of the Conservation Committee, were thanked for all their hard work with what is a very important role to ensure monies are well spent. Lisa Whiffin was thanked for helping with reports and converting some of them to PDF files ready for posting on the website. Special thanks go to our corporate sponsors and individual members for their generous donations.

Thanks were also extended to all OBC's overseas working representatives including Bob Kennedy in the US, Fon Intravooth and Phil Round who look after our members in Thailand, Paul Leader who assists with the distribution of publications to members in Hong Kong, Paul Thompson in Bangladesh, Terry Townshend in China who continues to be very active and Julian Hough who contributed a wonderful line drawing of Spoon-billed Sandpiper that you can see on notelets we have available for sale. They and others in the region all help to make OBC run smoothly. Thanks were also offered to fellow Council members for the time and energy they put into running the Club.

8. Election of 2017 Council

It was proposed that Mike Edgecombe continue as Chairman, John Gregory be elected as Treasurer and Jo Thomas continue as Secretary and this was proposed by Steve Rowland, seconded by John Geeson and approved unanimously. All Council members (as listed in the Agenda) offered their services for re-election, proposed by Rob Sheldon, seconded by Steve Rowland and approved unanimously.

9. Any Other Business

There was no AOB, so in summing up Mike Edgecombe thanked all Council members and echoed how immensely rewarding it is to be part of such a successful Club and called for others to come forward to offer help and support – no specific expert skills are required, just passion and an interest in birds.

There was no further business and the Chairman declared the 33rd OBC AGM closed.

Jo Thomas, Secretary