Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

Thursday 12th October 2023 - 19.15 - at Northern Rugby Club, Gosforth

1. Attendance and apologies - 25 members attended, apologies Alan Tilmouth, Steve Anderson.

2. Minutes of last meeting - (13th Oct 2022) accepted.

3. Chairman’s welcome and report - Martin Davison welcomed members to the AGM and thanked them for their continued support. Thanks were expressed to all those on the Committee and those not on the committee working on essential club functions, such as Andy Mould and the team of writers for their production of the Annual Report. The production of the Report is made less difficult because of the work done by the Bulletin editor and his team of writers. So thanks were also expressed for the work of Alan Tilmouth and his team, for their reliable delivery of the monthly bulletin, and for developing it’s presentation and style.

4. Matters arising from the last AGM – none

5. Treasurer’s report – a display of the unaudited accounts was projected. The Treasurer apologies for a typographical error, the surplus for the year should read £1550.83. The income item of £4857 is from the Development Fund. Our main source of income continues to be the annual subs, followed by Gift Aid. The increase in costs of BiN production, postage and record card storage was pointed out. The latter now up £20 to £800 pa.

6. Honorary Secretary’s Report AGM 2023

 The trustees of the charity forming the club committee during 2022-23 were Martin Davison (Chair), Jo Bentley (Honorary Treasurer), Tim Dean (Recorder), Trevor Blake (Sales), Steve Anderson (Outdoor Meetings), Alan Tilmouth (Bulletin Editor), Graham Sorrie (Twitter account) and Andrew Brunt (Honorary Secretary). Nominations were received for the existing committee members, and the committee functioned with one member short for the year. Martin Davison continued with the work of planning and booking speakers for the Indoor Meetings.

After our AGM in October Joanna Dailey gave us a presentation titled “The Story of the Northumberland Osprey”. A year by year account of the successes and failures of this magnificent raptor as recorded by the cameras and the latest satellite tracking technology. In November Gill Thomson gave us “Wader surveys and Curlews in Northumberland National Park” - Gill is the Ecologist for the Northumberland National Park Authority. Her talk was about the bird which is the basis of National Parks logo – the Curlew, how the survey work was done and how they are working with partners, volunteers and landowners to maintain and hopefully increase the number of breeding waders. In December Tom Cadwallender took us to darkest Peru with an account titled “Paddington gets the Bird”. This described many birding highlights and moved along at a cracking pace, visiting many different habitats, all of which had many paint-box birds. Our first talk of 2023 was given by Richard Baines who showed us some of the species to be found in the forests of Bhutan. Some superb photography and an informative commentary made it a rewarding night. In February Conrad Dickinson showed gave us an insight and much advice in photography techniques in his talk titled “Owl Photography and the Wider use of Cameras in Bird Watching”. Our Recorder Tim Dean helped us celebrate Northumberland’s Birds in March, using a selection of photographs taken since 2006 which displayed the full range of avifauna in our area. Everything from Garden Birds to spectacular seabirds and notable rarities. In April Richard Willis, the Senior Wildlife ranger for “Space for Shorebirds” explained how disturbance is now such a negative factor it is considered on a par with habitat loss for some waders. We restarted our programme in September with Mark Eaton giving us an update on the work of the Rare Breeding Birds panel and the fortunes, good or bad, of some of our breeding birds, and explained how ordinary birders can help. The committee thanks Martin Davison for his time and effort contacting people and arranging such a wide variety of speakers.

After some difficulties with updating our original Facebook account, Alan Tilmouth took over supervision of the content, and it is now an up to date source of information about upcoming club events and news of interest to members and non members alike. It can be accessed via a link on the club website pages.

Steve Anderson has continued to coordinate our outdoor programme, which included a trip to Langholm for Hen Harriers and other raptors, and an August trip to our local sites along the coast led by Tim.

Much appreciated is the work of compiling and editing the Bulletin, now being very capably handled by Alan Tilmouth. This is an important asset to club membership and the editor and team of writers are very committed and slick in getting the bulletin out so reliably. An essential element of Bulletin production is the regular collection of monthly records, which continues to be very effectively and politely managed by Clive Hampton.

Andy Mould and his team have continued to develop the quality of production of our Annual Report in its relatively new format. Andy has reported to and met with the committee to present alternatives and discuss its future.

We have received several requests for data from our past surveys. An administration charge is made for this when appropriate. Requests for survey data are currently managed by the Secretary.

The club website continues to be a vital resource for the distribution of data and requests for descriptions, and sometimes for members to sell or donate to others their surplus equipment or books. An addition to the site has been historical records from Monks House Bird Observatory in the 1950’s kindly provided by Steve Holliday. And if you are off on a foreign winter birding trip, don’t forget to check out the Trip Reports page.

6. Election of Officers - No nominations were received by the Secretary, beyond those of the existing committee, and no election was required. The committee continues to be one member short, the chairman appealed for volunteers. The committee consists of M Davison, J Bentley, T Dean, S Anderson, T Blake, A Tilmouth, G Sorrie and A Brunt.

7. AOB (1) Record Card Storage was raised by the Chairman. This is a growing expense the committee has been aware of, the late Steve Barratt investigated the practicality of scanning every card (sometimes needing both sides) and creating a digital version. This transpired to be not feasible or economic. Previous storage solutions with the NNHS and the Hancock Museum are no longer available, hence the storage in a commercial unit. However, the scanning of all our paper bulletins did prove successful, and all 50 years are done, and to some extent are searchable within each year set. This should prove a much more accessible and well used resource than the cards, which are not of use to research projects as they tell us much more about where birders go than where the birds might be. AB commented that requests for data from ecological consultants and the like are invariably wanted from surveys (for which we make an administrative charge) rather than the other sources available. JB made the point that the record card storage costs are only going to go up, and we must economise. MD pointed out that the cards are a seriously under used resource by members, and were so before being put in the present storage facility.

Comment from floor – cards should be made available to club members if wanted. MD to raise at next committee meeting.

Proposal from Tom Cadwallender - “That the committee should dispose of the Record Cards as they see fit, once the Digitised Bulletins are available to members”.

23 for, 1 against, 1 abstention.

AOB (2). Q from floor “Who keeps the excel spreadsheets of data”. TD maintains up to date and backed up copies.

AOB (3). Tim Dean highlighted the work of Keith Naylor in maintaining and making accessible his website “Rare Birds in Northumbria” which is a very valuable and up to date resource, and expressed the Clubs appreciation and thanks.

AOB (4) Thanks were expressed to Alan MacFarlane for attending so reliably with his books for sale, which always attracts a lot of interest, and it was pointed out that Alan makes a donation to club funds.

Meeting closed at 19.50 - Date of next AGM - Thursday 10th October 2024 (tbc).