

Herefordshire Ornithological Club

Minutes of a Committee Meeting held on 21st September 2017 at Holmer Parish Centre

~~(unapproved)~~

Present: Gerald Wells, Chairman; Gareth Morgan & Tom Weale, Vice Presidents; Mick Colquhoun; Norman Fincham; Susanna Grunsell; Rachel Jenkins; Una Morgan; Robert Taylor.

1 Apologies: John Pullen; Nicky Davies; Mervyn Davies; Chris Robinson; Jim Wilkinson.

2 Minutes of the meeting on 15th June: Section 3) 9.4 “not” was added to read “the firm route has **not** been decided”. These were then approved and signed.

3 Matters arising:

3)3.3 Burley Gate update Robert reported on a site visit made with Mervyn, the Chairman and Dennis Chapple and showed the aerial mapping produced by a specialist drone survey. It is obvious it will be more difficult than first envisaged especially on one half of the terrain and a larger team would be needed even for the winter survey. Dennis had been the only volunteer from the appeals in the newsletter, emails to local birders and at meetings. The project committee had decided that it was worth trying to do a winter survey, but a breeding bird survey would not be possible with the current volunteer numbers. Gerald Wells and Dennis would do some preliminary work and 2 teams would do a winter survey November to March (Mervyn & Robert; Gerald Wells and Dennis) Options were discussed and ideas of potential sources of help out with the Club agreed. Robert would draft letters for the chairman to Evan Bowen-Jones of HWT, Birmingham and Cardiff universities and the BTO.

Action: Robert & Gerald

3)6 First Bird Track training session had taken place for 3 of the 5 members who signed up. Chris reported that he would offer individual training to the two unable to attend.

Action: Chris

5)2 Brockall Gravel Pit Mick has raised the issue of declining water levels with Charlotte of the Duchy. The low levels have led to public getting access to the islands and no species breeding this year. (*as per his email already circulated*). Charlotte has provided a restoration plan (but this is dated 2001) and mentioned a possible requirement for a hydrology survey. Mick has contributed the information requested as to the stream supplying the pits. He will report if he hears more.

6) Records The Secretary supplied a list of minutes in her possession which start at 1969 as a mixture of handwritten minute books and typed sheets. From 2003 all minutes are also saved digitally on Dropbox.

It was agreed that 1969 – 2006 would be offered to Herefordshire Archives together together with some papers in the Chairman’s possession.

Action: Una & Gerald

4 Treasurer’s Report

This had been circulated. It is possible that Wellington work will have restrictions on what we can clear because of Tarmac’s H&S policy.

5 Indoor Meeting Speakers

Robert suggested that in finalising the speaker's programme we should try to plan for one local, one international, one species specific, one habitat specific and one on bird biology. These guidelines and Mervyn Davies recommendations were taken into account and Rachel agreed to do the booking of the names suggested. We will supply her with the full contact information needed. The names suggested are Dr Robert Thomas on birds and climate change, Steve Roberts on Goshawks, Denise Foster on Swifts, Tim Birkhead (via Robert), Keith Offord on Raptor identification, Mya-Rose Craig (to be reviewed), Dominic Couzens on bird migration or secret lives of garden birds and Baz Hughes on the WWT Spoon-billed Sandpiper programme.

Action: Una & Rachel & Robert

6 Field Meetings

John Pullen reported that a group to discuss the next field outings was meeting in a few days time. The Chairman has reminded John that Nick Smith has offered to lead a walk at Croft Castle in May for summer migrants.

7 Correspondence

- Webs Survey is in hand; Gerry Bilbao is covering Wellington.
- Nest recording: Chris's report (circulated): *Met with Andrew Strong last week following his email about expanding NRS participation. We propose holding a workshop on nest finding next spring but publicise in the HOC Newsletter before that and hopefully attract prospective surveyors. I have recruited Graham Wren to help and BTO also have a network of NRS mentors who we may be able to use (Jerry Lewis in Gwent is the nearest and I have contacted him but no response yet). Andrew will also be writing an article for the newsletter about his experiences this year.*
- WISH (Wellbeing, Information and Signposting for Herefordshire) agreed to HOC being listed on their website.

Action: Una

8 Sub Committee Business Editorial

Mervyn's update on Annual report:

- *Weather summary – completed and finalised*
- *Accepted rarities list finalised and nearly fully approved by Rarities Committee*
- *New species section all completed and agreed*
- *Systematic List – seven of the eight sections of the Systematic List received, five sections edited and four approved by AHE/JRP/NS. Hope to complete editing this section by 15 Oct and all approved by 31 Oct.*
- *Review articles – two of the five articles finalised, one in draft form, two being written – hope to complete these by 15 Nov.*
- *Nest box report received; Ringing and Garden Birdwatch report still to do.*
- *Other small sections still to do but take little time.*

We are slightly behind last year but still hope to produce proofing draft by Christmas, proof-reading in early Jan and publication by end January.

Records WG

Garden Bird Watch; Report on a meeting with Ian & Natalie Buttriss (*see separate sheet circulated*)
There will be an article in the November News and Mervyn is in touch with BTO to get local information from their national data.

9 Membership Survey

The article summarizing actions from the survey in the last HOC News failed to get any more volunteers for Club activities. Some of the issues raised have been addressed. Robert will review the survey findings to see what else is to be done. **Action: Robert**

10 Website

Chris 's email reported on his conversation with Renton of the Berkshire Ornithological Club:

Notes taken from conversation with Renton re the BOC website:-

Relatively little access but large parts of it (like ours) is a repository for useful information (birding sites, club committee, how to join, etc.).

He thinks that the site is now their main recruiting source.

There are plans to expand the content to include the county database thereby obviating the need for a county report (!) - they are well behind with these.

Facebook is their main communication tool - good for recruiting younger non-members.

Because there are two websites (Marek's berksbirds and the BOC one) there is cross fertilisation between the two. Many non-BOC members will go to Marek's site first because that's where the bird news is but he has set up links to the BOC site which can (and does) draw people over.

The BOC site is a CMS based system and any number of people can be authorised to make changes to content.

They have 4 people Membership Sec., Secretary, Programme Sec. and Records Administrator.

His son Jason is very busy but could still be persuaded to build a new site for us at reasonable cost but we might have to wait a bit.

Mick explained the background of our current website, set up at no cost to the club and designed to be simple and quick to load even on smart phones as demonstrated by Gareth, although it is now an obsolete platform. Many of the comments from the members survey referred to the sightings page which is the Going Birding link and is outside our direct control. The committee had looked at the BOC and Berksbird sites and most felt that HOC was a good site. It was agreed that a small group Robert, Mick and Chris would look at the basic functionality needed for improvement and report to the November Committee. The Twitter account is run by Scott Larman who puts data on manually together with some of the active birders and we have a link to it. **Action: Robert, Mick & Chris**

11 Any Other Business

Curlews: Chris reports: *As you saw in my last report, we had little success in finding Curlew nests this year although 12 sites were identified. Big learning curve not yet mastered! I hope to get some more ideas at the Slimbridge meeting on 11th October. I really hope we can continue surveying next year especially as we are now part of a network of Curlew groups. I intend to call a meeting of this year's participants to share our experiences this year and hopefully recruit more help for next year*

Swallow Barn: Chris reports: *I emailed Leslie Wiles shortly after the last committee meeting but have not heard back from him. I can only suppose he has either not sold yet or has made other plans. I have just emailed him again.*

Swifts: Mick has sent all the forms in and will coordinate the information. It was hoped that the results of the survey and any concerns arising would be communicated to the Diocese of Hereford.

Indoor Meeting presentations:

Problems with Holmer microphone have been reported. Maybe we need battery powered personal microphone which just needs to plug into an amplifier.

Una will bring a borrowed projector stand for next meeting to see if it is worth the Club buying one.

European Breeding Bird Atlas: request for sponsorship. It was agreed to send 50 euros subject to Treasurer's approval.

Castle Green Fair Sunday 26th November Susanna would like some volunteers to help. Mick will give her birds' nests.

Date of Next Meeting: 16th November 2017