

HAMPSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Minutes of the thirty fifth Annual General Meeting of the Hampshire Ornithological Society, held at the John Stripe Theatre, University of Winchester on Saturday 29th March 2014.

The meeting was held at 13:05 during the Hampshire Ornithological Society Open Day. The HOS President, Chris Packham welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with his President's address (see below). This was followed by the AGM.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Kate Allen.

2. Minutes from the Thirty fourth Annual General Meeting (13th April, 2013)

The minutes were accepted. Proposed by Jonathan Mycock and seconded by Keith Betton.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Chairman's Report

The HOS Chairman Alan Snook, opened his report by commenting on how good it was to see so many people present, considering the counter-attraction presented by a glorious spring day outside. While our present numbers are around 1700, Alan would like to see HOS membership hit the 2000 mark and include more younger members. Alan felt that having Chris Packham as our President is positive for the Society, as his media presence may encourage younger people to take an interest in the natural world in general – and birds in particular. He also congratulated Chris on becoming President of the BTO.

Alan referred to the HOS activities over the past year and congratulated all the people involved. He singled out the recently re-constituted Bird Project Forum. Items which particularly impressed him involved the use of technology. He mentioned the nest-cam on a Hawfinch nest which captured film of a Goshawk taking Hawfinch fledglings; the live streaming of video of a very successful artificial Kingfisher nest at Winnall Moors; and the sad news that the Woodcock carrying the HOS sponsored tracking device had met its end – possibly in the talons of a Goshawk.

Alan concluded his address by thanking the members of the Management, Membership and Scientific Committees for their help and support. He closed by reminding members of the BirdTrail event to be held at Boldrewood, New Forest on May 11th and invited members present to volunteer to help out on the day.

5. Treasurer's Report

The HOS Treasurer, Brian Leach had made copies of the 2013 accounts available on the HOS website and to members on entry to the meeting. Brian pointed out that he has presented the accounts on a receipts and expenditure basis, rather than the accrual basis used previously. As the Society has almost no tangible assets, this is a simpler way of presenting the accounts. This means that, for this year, the current year's accounts are not directly comparable to the previous year's. He pointed out two anomalies. The 2013 accounts show Gift Aid recovery for two years, which had a positive effect on the accounts. However, the earlier delivery of the 2012 Bird Report meant that the costs for both the 2011 and 2012 reports fell in the accounting year (negative impact). The accounts still showed a small surplus of £257 and the Society has around £43,000 in its various accounts. Brian said that the Society is in a healthy financial position with sound reserves, but with the publication of the Atlas coming up, these may prove necessary.

The accounts were proposed by John Eyre, seconded by John Clark and accepted by the members present.

6. Election of Officers

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The list of Officers presented for election was included in the papers for the AGM, which were sent to all members, six weeks prior to the meeting.

The list of Officers was proposed by Mike Wearing, seconded by Steve Oakes and accepted by all the members present.

7. Any Other Business

There being no other business, the formal business of the Annual General Meeting was closed at 13:35.

8. President's Address

Our President, Chris Packham took the opportunity of his address, to point out some of the scientific advances he has become aware of, which are increasing our understanding of the natural world. He started by explaining how recent work on the various stages of moths have shed light on the remarkable process of metamorphosis. It appears that adult moths retain some knowledge of their existence as a caterpillar, in spite of the enormous transition they undergo, through the formation of the chrysalis and the adult. Recent work on dolphins and long-lived birds, such as parrots, has shown that these animals make sounds that are unique to the individual. In the case of dolphins, this is an important component of their social inter-actions. Miniature tracking devices have been fitted on insects, and to an increasing number of birds. New discoveries are being made all the time of the enormous distances that birds and other organisms will move as part of their daily existence.

Chris had an opportunity to follow his namesake, satellite-tracked, Cuckoo to Ghana and got to within 10km of the bird! Cuckoos have been recorded flying at heights of 1.5km, from where they appear to be able to locate large storm systems. The rains from these storms help concentrate insects and cause termites to emerge, offering ample food supply for Cuckoos in their wintering areas. Although happy to get near 'his' Cuckoo in its winter quarters, Chris was disturbed at the amount of habitat destruction and killing (for food) that was going on. On the subject of killing birds, Chris told us that he will shortly be taking a small film crew to Malta to record the slaughter of migrating birds that takes place there each year. While he would like the resulting films to be broadcast, he will be putting them on YouTube in an effort to force more action to stop this illegal activity.

Although we are getting better understanding of birds and other wildlife, Chris stressed his view that it still requires conservation measures to be implemented, based on these scientific investigations.

John Shillitoe
Honorary Secretary
April, 2014