

MINUTES
Oxford Ornithological Society Annual General Meeting

11th May 2016, 19:45 – 20:30
Exeter Hall, Kidlington

The meeting was attended by 53 members and was chaired by Sir Clive Elliott.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Roy Overall, John Melling and Andy Gosler.

2. President's opening remarks

Clive Elliott commented briefly on the previous year's events. The sad loss of former President, John Brucker was remembered. The President also remarked upon the good attendance that has been seen at OOS meetings and thanked Graham Lenton for his work in delivering interesting programmes of indoor talks. Thanks were also made to the many people who make important contributions to the work of the OOS, including the writers who have made contributions to annual reports.

3. Minutes of 2015 Annual General Meeting

The minutes were approved by Clive Elliott.

Proposer: George Candelin.

Seconder: Richard Ebbes.

4. Matters arising

None.

5. Secretary's report

Caroline Coleman presented the Secretary's report for 2015 - 2016. A full version of the report is appended.

6. Treasurer's report

Eric Dunford presented the Treasurer's report for 2015 - 2016. A full version of the report and accounts are appended.

The accounts were accepted unanimously by those present.

Proposer: Graham Coleman.

Seconder: Neil Livingstone.

7. Election of independent examiner of accounts

Jon Uren was elected unanimously as independent examiner of the accounts for the Society.

Proposer: Graham Coleman.

Seconder: Ian Lewington.

8. Conservation Officer's report

Alan Larkman presented the Conservation Officer's report for 2015 - 2016. A full version of the report is appended.

9. Resignations and election of Committee members

There were two resignations from Committee positions.

Graham Lenton stood down as Speakers' Secretary. Robin Parsons was the only nominee to take over this post and was elected unanimously.

Clive Elliott stood down as Patchwork Coordinator. It was proposed that Graham Lenton remain on the Committee to take over this position. This was supported unanimously by the members present.

The other current Committee members were elected unanimously.

Proposer: Janet Persson.

Seconder: Peter Pool.

10. Other matters for discussion (submitted in advance)

None.

11. Any Other Business

None.

12. Chairman's closing remarks

Clive Elliott closed the AGM.

**Secretary's Report 2015-2016
Presented by Caroline Coleman**

This has been my first year as Secretary to this Society and I'm pleased to say there have been many more ups than downs. It was, of course, particularly sad to lose our former President, John Brucker, earlier this year. The number of people attending his funeral reflected the great respect and friendship he had commanded and it became clear to me that his had been a life lived to the full.

John made regular contributions to the Oxford Times. Barry Hudson and Keith Clack continue to write interesting articles that raise the profile of the OOS as well as providing funding for our conservation activities.

Once again, the Society has put on a full programme of interesting talks and outdoor walks. Steven Alley has worked hard in planning and leading the outdoor walks for members, while Graham Lenton has brought us a stimulating schedule of fantastic speakers. His task has involved a lot of hard work and pressure to make sure things go smoothly on the night. Graham is standing down from his role as Speaker's Secretary, and we thank him for his work in this role. We are delighted that he has offered to continue to support the Society as Patchwork Coordinator. We have an excellent nomination for a replacement in Robin Parsons, who has assisted Graham for the last few months.

We have heard from speakers on a wide variety of topics. Two of the highlights of the year came from within the Society and I would particularly like to thank Ian Lewington and Graham Lenton for entertaining and informing us with their talks this year.

Our venue, here at Exeter Hall, continues to provide a spacious and convenient space for meetings and I would like to thank the Parish Council and, particularly, the caretakers for their help in dealing with problems when they arise. I'm pleased to say that tea and coffee sales continue to provide financial support to the Society as well as giving a great opportunity to meet and catch up with others at indoor meetings. The refreshments are expertly organised by Marie-Thérèse Elliott, Rosemarie Lenton and Alethea Creighton. The days when we went through a whole meeting without chocolate biscuits now seems a long time ago.

Our Bernard Tucker Memorial Lecture last November, given by Ken Smith, was a big success. Once again, we received sponsorship from British Birds and organised the event jointly with the Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire.

The OOS was represented at several events during the course of the year. Last year's Oxford Festival of Nature was kicked off with a talk on farmland birds by our Conservation Officer, Alan Larkman. John Melling led a bird walk and we were represented by Alan Larkman and Barry Hudson at a very rainy WildFair. Fortunately, Alan had the foresight to ask for an indoor pitch. I wasn't so lucky and spent the day getting very wet outside. Alan, Ian Lewington and I manned a stand at the Wychwood Forest Fair in September and we also attended a fascinating local BTO conference in Benson this March. All of these events are good fun, but they take quite a bit of organisation and are tiring too so my thanks go to everybody who has helped represent the OOS over the past year.

Ray Bellis has continued to manage and improve the OOS website and Ian Lewington puts a lot of work into the Bulletins. Many thanks to both. We have also been able to publish a beautifully produced annual report for 2011. One of the unsung heroines of this Society is Janet Persson, who undertakes the time consuming task of mailing bulletins to those members that opt for copies to be sent by post.

Through my work I have recently come to understand better the database of members' bird sightings. This is held and managed for us by Jon Uren, another person who works behind the scenes on our behalf.

You may notice that many people help to make the OOS run smoothly, a number of those individuals are on the committee, but many are not. Offers of help are always welcomed and you don't necessarily have to commit standing for a committee place if that doesn't suit you.

Once again, the Society is continuing to prosper and maintain its membership levels. All of the committee members and many others are responsible for this state of affairs and I particularly want to thank Barry for helping me to pick up the job of Secretary over the past year. But the good condition of the Society is also thanks to all of our members. Thank you all for supporting the OOS.

Treasurer's Report 2015-2016
Presented by Eric Dunford

General Fund Receipts Income increased by £900 this year, mainly due to several generous donations by members, but also because of a one-off increase in Gift-Aid tax reclaimed. We now have 296 members (55 of whom are family members), which is just two down on the year.

General Fund Payments Expenditure this year was up by £300, with the £500 contribution to the On-line Atlas and increased postage costs partly offset by a large saving on Speakers' Fees. After allowing for credits and debits (including provision for future Annual Reports), the balance increased by £300, leaving £4,900 in hand.

Conservation Special Fund This benefitted from a substantial grant which your Chairman has obtained towards the supply of bird seed and from Oxford Times payments for monthly articles written by Barry Hudson and Keith Clack, and generous donations from other members. However we are committed to using the grant over two years and after allowing for liabilities there was a small deficit of £160, leaving a balance of £5,400.

16/17 Budget The Committee has agreed a Budget for 2016/7. With income and expenditure roughly in balance, and over £9000 in hand when the two funds are totalled, the Committee has recommended that membership fees should remain at their current level; namely £6 Students, £15 single and £22 Family Membership.

Many thanks are due to Jon Uren for carrying out the duties of Independent Examiner and Janet Persson for carrying out the monthly chore of posting out the Bulletins.

Oxford Ornithological Society **Accounting Statement (Receipts & Payments Basis)**

Section A: General Fund

2015/2016

2014/2015

A1: Receipts

A1a: Gifts Donations and Voluntary receipts

Donations Members	751	332
Donations Non Members	150	134
Donations Bernard Tucker Lecture	144	332
Subscriptions	4,824	4,596
Gift Aid	1,548	1,090
Refreshments Donations	265	244
Bernard Tucker Lecture Sponsorship	100	100

A1b: Receipts from Trading Activities

Annual Report Sales	40	63
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A1c: Receipts earned from Assets

Interest Barclays	137	135
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Total Receipts from Section A

7,958

7,026

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<u>Oxford Ornithological Society</u>	<u>2015/16</u>	<u>2014/15</u>	<u>Notes</u>
<u>A2a: Payments</u>			
<u>A2: Payments directly for Charitable Purposes</u>			
Indoor Meetings Hall Hire	1,458	1,411	
Speakers Fees	273	635	
Annual Report and contribution to Atlas	2,092	1,577	1
Programme Cards	127	127	
Envelopes and Labels for Bulletin	132	37	
Bulletin Production	1,317	1,315	
Postage for Bulletins and Annual Report	1,560	1,331	2
Refreshments Costs	0	31	
Subscription to ONCF	15	15	
A2: Payments for publicity, fund raising, Management and admin			
Liability Insurance	113	113	
Bernard Tucker expenses	177	204	
ANHS share of BTL Surplus	34	89	
Website	57	57	
Total Payments for Section 2	7,354	6,943	
Total Income A1	7,958	7,026	
<u>Net Receipts/(Payments) –A1- A2</u>	<u>604</u>	<u>83</u>	
A3: Cash Funds last year	9,106	8,923	
<u>Cash Fund this year</u>	<u>9,711</u>	<u>9,106</u>	

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Note 1: £500 was given towards the On-line Atlas in 15/16

Note 2: Extra cost of posting Ann. Rept £250 in 15/16 (~£130 in 14/15)

Oxford Ornithological Society Accounting Statement (Receipts & Payments Basis)

Section B: Special Fund	22015/16	2014/15	Notes
<u>B1 Receipts:</u>			
<u>B1a: Gifts Donations and Voluntary Receipts</u>			
Oxford Times Articles	0	440	see D2
ENTRUST Grant	5,480		Two year duration
Donations to Tree Sparrow Project	1,083	1,445	
<u>B1b: Receipts from Trading Activities</u>			
Sale of Publications	5	2	
<u>Total Receipts earned from Assets</u>	<u>6,568</u>	<u>1,886</u>	
<u>B2 Payments</u>			
<u>B2a: Payments directly for Charitable purposes</u>			
Tree Sparrow Project	1,789	889	
Barn Owl Project	596	500	
Hobby Project	300		
<u>Total Payments</u>	<u>2,685</u>	<u>1,389</u>	
Net of Receipts/ (Payments)	3,883	497	

Oxford Ornithological Society Accounting Statement Receipts & Payments Basis)

Section D; Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at Financial Year End

Notes

At 31st March 2016

D1: Cash Funds	2016	2015
Barclays	12,549	12,413
Nat West Bank	7,295	2,944
Total Cash Fund	19,844	15,357

Represented by

General Fund (A)	9,710	9,106
Special Fund (B)	10,133	6,251

D2: Credits (current)

Oxford Times	480		Fund
			B

D2 Liabilities (future)

Seed Purchases from Grant	4,600		B	Grant already received
3 Annual Reports	4,800	4,500	A	Not yet produced
Special Publication	600	600	B	Donation already received

Estimated net in General Fund 4,910 4,606

Estimated net in Ringing/Fieldwork Fund 5,413 5,651

D3: Non-monetary assets retained for Charities own use

Laser Projector (£200 Jan 2006) Display Board (£150 Nov 2009)

**Conservation Report
Alan Larkman**

I will try to give you a brief overview of some of the Society's conservation activities over the last year. As many of you will know, I am very pleased to say that Barry Hudson and I are now joint Conservation Officers. He agreed that I should present the report this year, but he might do so in future. In view of this, I thought I might give a slightly more personal report than previously.

As in previous years, our practical conservation work has been centred around owls and birds of prey on the one hand and small farmland birds on the other. Starting with Barn Owls, Pat Wixey and his team, primarily Albert Allen and Ian Anderson, have had a challenging year coping with illness to Ian and accidental injury (not owl-related) to Albert, together with a crash in vole numbers. Morale in the team may also not have been helped by our local wildlife trust producing leaflets showing a drawing of a Barn Owl with the question 'The last Barn Owl in Oxfordshire?' In spite of these difficulties, the group made a total of 155 site visits, monitoring 143 different Barn Owl boxes from which Pat estimates that 53 young were fledged, although this is well down on last year's estimate of 140 fledglings. However, there were some encouraging signs. Of the 10 new nest boxes put up during the winter of 2014/15, 8 were occupied and 3 produced young. Furthermore, another 9 boxes were put up last winter in response to landowners' requests, indicating that there is still enthusiasm for trying to help this popular species.

Several ringed Barn Owls were recovered last year, mainly resulting from road casualties. One owl was recovered, apparently poisoned, from Bedfordshire, but another that had been ringed by Pat at a site near Faringdon in July 2005 was recovered by a ringer at a nest site at Rutland Water, making the bird 10 years old, which is exceptional for Barn Owls in the wild. Pat thanks Albert and Ian for their practical help, all participating farmers and landowners especially Sue Parrish of High Cogges Farm for the rent-free loan of a building, and the OOS for their financial support.

Andrew Freeman is probably less familiar to most members, but he makes use of his expert tree-climbing skills to monitor and provide artificial nests for Hobbies. Like other falcons, Hobbies do not build their own nests but use nests constructed by other species, often Carrion Crows. Unfortunately corvids often decorate their nests with man-made items, including discarded bailer twine. This is harmless to crows, but young Hobbies often get their knobby legs and talons entangled in the twine with disastrous results. Provision of artificial nests made from safe materials avoids this problem. However, despite his help, West Oxfordshire's Hobbies had a poor breeding season last year, with 3 sites holding pairs that made no breeding attempt, one pair that lost its brood and another that produced only a single fledgling. The best news was from a pair near Buscot which produced a full brood of 3 young from a newly erected artificial nest. We hope for better things for our Hobbies this spring.

Our project to provide food and nestboxes for Tree Sparrows and other small farmland birds has continued, and I would like to thank Clive Elliott, Barry Hudson, Sally Taylor and her family, Albert Allen, Bill Haynes, David Bury, Phil Barber and Martin Corley, all the sympathetic farmers and everyone else who has put in the substantial effort needed to keep the project going for another year. I thought I might take this opportunity to give a personal account of my recent history with small farmland birds.

I moved to my present house some 17 years ago, at about the time that research became pretty solid that the main reason for the dramatic declines in Tree Sparrows and other small farmland birds was food shortage during winter and early spring. In consequence, I have been feeding Tree Sparrows and other species on an industrial scale for the last 15 years. While this has given me more pleasure and satisfaction than I would ever have thought possible, there have been substantial changes over the years, some of which give me concerns for the future. In the early years, providing millet seed in large hanging feeders was almost a 'magic bullet' for Tree Sparrows. Initially, the Tree Sparrows had the feeders almost to themselves, and their numbers increased steadily from year to year. However, over time, other species have begun to make use of this food source, including House Sparrows and Reed Buntings which now outnumber the Tree Sparrows during the winter months.

I also feed birds on the ground every winter, which attracts hundreds of Chaffinches and Linnets, together with smaller numbers of Yellowhammers and Bullfinches and a few Bramblings. This year, for the first time, Bullfinches have started regularly taking food from the hanging feeders. Clearly, millet is no longer a 'magic bullet' selectively targeting only Tree Sparrows, and the nightmare scenario is that one of the really abundant species, such as Chaffinches, learns to use the hanging feeders. Effectively, this would bring an end to my ability to provide worthwhile amounts of additional food for Tree Sparrows. It looks as though something as apparently simple as giving food to starving Tree Sparrows will keep our minds as well as our bodies occupied in the coming years.

We have been fortunate in that I have been able to secure a grant to cover the running costs of the Tree Sparrow project for the next 2 years via the landfill tax credits scheme, which has lifted a substantial financial burden from the shoulders of the team. I also tried to obtain funding from this source for the Barn Owl and Hobby work, but my efforts were not successful, simply because both Barn Owls and Hobbies are now 'green-listed' species and so are not considered to be conservation priorities. In the absence of grant funding, the society continues to provide modest

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support from our 'ringing and conservation fund'. This fund was set up by John Brucker using income from his regular articles in the Oxford Times. Barry Hudson and Keith Clack have continued to write such articles and donate the proceeds to the fund. Indeed, regular readers of the Oxford Times will know that they have actually taken things to a new level. The articles are now much longer and occupy more page space, and are also enhanced by simply excellent bird photographs taken by members of the Society, notably Roger Wyatt. We are very grateful for the skills, hard work and generosity of all those involved for enabling us to support worthwhile conservation projects.

Housing and other development continues on a large scale in many areas of the county. Much of it takes place on intensive farmland with relatively little impact on wildlife, but valuable areas are also threatened. We have also been subjected to the unedifying spectacle of owners of designated sites arguing that the wildlife value of their sites has deteriorated, by neglect or deliberate action, to such an extent that they no longer merit their designation, and asking for this obstacle to development to be removed. It is clear that not everyone in the county shares our attitude towards wildlife.

The illegal persecution of birds of prey continues to be an issue nationally. Most incidents occur in the north of the country, but there was a disturbing report involving 3 Red Kites from much closer to home just over a month ago. Two birds were confirmed to have been shot within Oxfordshire at Oakley Wood, Crowmarsh Gifford near Wallingford, and a third Red Kite was found dead nearby although the cause of death could not be established. All those involved in combatting raptor persecution are convinced that incidents actually reported represent only the tip of a much larger iceberg. Could I ask all members to be vigilant when out in the countryside and report any suspicious goings on, to me if no-one else.