

## Chairman's Report

On behalf of the Committee, I must apologise for changing the format of this year's AGM from the intended face-to-face meeting to 'Zoom' format. The Committee took the view that with the continuing high levels of Covid in the community, it would be inappropriate to ask members to meet in an indoor setting.

While our activities are still far from being back to normal, we have been able to resume some aspects of Branch activities

Holding indoor meetings was not possible, but the joint 'Zoom' meetings with the Dumfries and Stewartry Branches were quite popular and enjoyable, though I accept they can never replace face-to-face presentations and meetings. Due to the uncertainty as to the situation at the start of the winter programme next September, HQ are planning a further series of presentations using 'Zoom', which will be delivered to all branches throughout Scotland at the same time. Details of how these will be structured will be circulated to members in due course.

Our monthly Discussion Group meetings were held via 'Zoom'. In some ways, this was an advantage as it meant that members throughout the Borders could join in, while avoiding the need for long car journeys in the winter. It will be up to the new committee to decide on the best way forward for next winter.

The one aspect of activity which has more or less returned to normal is our outings. So far, five have taken place: to Eyemouth, the John Muir Country Park, The Hirsell & Lees Haugh, Newmains and Langholm Moor. All have been well attended, but the difficulty of car-sharing may have put some members and friends off coming along. It has been very enjoyable to meet in outdoor settings and enjoy and appreciate all the Borders has to offer. Three further trips are planned during April, May and June to Musselburgh and Aberlady Bay, Innerleithen and Flora Wood and the Black Barony area at Eddelston. We hope to see a good turn-out for these outings

Once again, we are indebted to members for entering their sightings on Birdtrack, our principal database. In 2021, the number of records fell from 88,877 in 2020 to 79,404. A few contributors did increase the number of records they entered, but these were offset by a few members moving away from the Borders, or being out-with the area for substantial parts of the year. Records are obtained from other sources, but we do encourage members to use Birdtrack. The introduction of the App has allowed sightings to be entered directly when in the field, though care has to be taken to ensure that the location has been set correctly.

The outstanding sighting for the year must be the White-tailed Eagle that was seen on numerous occasions in the east of the Borders. It was a truly magnificent sight. There were

large increases in the numbers of records of Golden Eagle, Marsh Harrier and Little Egret. In addition, over twenty local rarities were recorded.

During the latter part of the year the Branch developed a set of Local Survey Initiatives (LSIs) with the objective of improving coverage of rare and scarce inland breeders in the Borders. This project was initiated and moved forward by Alasdair Reid. To assist in the surveying of nocturnal species an application was made through the SOC Grant Application Scheme for the purchase of audio equipment. The application was successful and the equipment will allow for enhanced monitoring of species such as Nightjar. Our appreciation and thanks go to Alasdair for all his work in this project.

The Borders Bird Report remains an essential part of birding in the Borders. Our thanks must be recorded to Tom Brewis and his team for all the work they carried out in processing the data and producing the Report. Last year, the Report was produced in hard-copy and provided on-line in PDF format. The new committee will have to decide on the format for the 2021 report

As I am standing down as Chairman, I would like to thank the Committee for their hard work throughout the year and for the support that members have given me. I wish the new Committee a very successful year ahead.

Martin Moncrieff