

Chairman's Report

What a strange year this has been. No meetings, no outings and members unable to meet up, even in small groups. However, birds are still out there to be seen and heard and many of you have been going out and doing just that.

At the start of lockdown, concerns were expressed that the number of records would drop significantly due to travel restrictions. Nothing could be further from the truth. In 2019, 56255 records were entered on BirdTrack, while in 2020 that rose to 88877. It will be extremely interesting to compare the dataset for last year with those from previous years as the sites visited will have been very different and many on a more regular basis.

Two Scottish Rarities were recorded in the Borders last year. A Montague's Harrier was seen by Dave Graham at Reston in May and a Greenish Warbler by Patrick Safford at St Abb's Head in August. Other Local Rarities included Dotterel, Wryneck, Nightjar, Rose-coloured Starling and Pallas's Warbler.

A special thanks must go to all who entered their records on BirdTrack and to the others who passed them to David and I for entry. I would take this opportunity to remind members that records entered on other sites such as Borders birds, the What's App site 'Borders Rare & Scarce', Whiteadderbirds and eBirds should also be entered on BirdTrack, otherwise it cannot be guaranteed they will be included in the annual Borders Bird Report.

Although impossible to hold our own indoor meetings, we were able to join up with the Dumfries and Stewartry Branches for 'Zoom' presentations. Due to continued uncertainty about restrictions later in the year, Headquarters have found it necessary to draw plans for 'Zoom' presentations to continue from September to December. Plans for meetings during the first part of 2022 are under consideration.

At previous AGMs, it was agreed that the Committee should investigate venues other than the Townhouse for our monthly meeting. Due to facilities being closed, it has been impossible to progress this any further. It will be considered, as and when, the level of restrictions on premises become clearer.

Outings are another aspect of our activities which have not been possible. It is our intention to organise outings initially in the Borders, as soon as restrictions permit.

The Discussion Group has met via 'zoom' on a monthly basis throughout the winter. In fact, I would consider these to have been a success with more members participating, partly due to no travel being necessary during the winter months.

Once again, a huge thanks must go to Tom Brewis, Gavin Paterson and Chris Green for their work in producing another excellent Bird Report. However, we now face major decisions regarding the future of the Report. Printing costs increased substantially for the 2019 copy and sales fell dramatically resulting in a loss being made. The Branch cannot sustain such losses and for that reason the future format and funding of the Report will be discussed at the AGM as a separate item.

After the AGM in September, Tom Brewis set up a Google Group to replaced our Yahoo Borders Bird News site. David Parkinson has now taken over management of the site and it appears to be operating successfully with over 80 members now using it. Thanks goes to Tom for his initial work setting up the site and to David for now managing it.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Committee and all members who helped in any way, during the last year and in my time as Chairman. I wish the new Committee every success and hope that as a Branch we can get back to organising activities as was the norm before Covid.

Martin Moncrieff