



Borders Branch

**AGM
Via Zoom
Monday, 14th September, 7.30 p.m.**

MINUTES

Attendees

Andrew Mossop, Harry Urquhart, Tom Brewis, Alan Kerr, Richard Jackson, Gavin Patterson, Sheila Horsburgh, Kate Cherry, Mike Betts, Martin Moncrieff, Neil Stratton, David Parkinson

Apologies were received from:

Malcolm and Elise Ross, Dorothy Small, Heather Johnston, Bob Watterston, Jim Douglas

Approval of Minutes of 2019 AGM

Approval of the Minutes

proposed by Neil Stratton, seconded by David Parkinson

Approved nem con

Matters arising, last item on agenda, regarding hosting of speakers.

Chairman makes clear that when speakers given dinner in Town House, dinner was paid for by committee members.

Speakers have never been accommodated in paid-for hotels.

Chairman had started to consider alternative future venues, as he undertook to do at last AGM, when lockdown began.

Chairman cannot see us being in a position to have indoor meetings before end of year and unlikely to have any before April. Meetings much more likely to be by Zoom. So, no further work done on alternative venues.

If were indoor meetings, Town House could accommodate no more than 15 with social distancing. George & Abbotsford's function room even smaller. Local authority venues currently closed.

In all probability meetings will be by Zoom up to and including next AGM.

Mike Betts makes point Peebles group has proposed move to another venue. SWT Central Borders Group uses Langlee Community Centre – at £30 per meeting as opposed to £70 for Town House"

In reply David Parkinson who has attended SWT meetings at Langlee Community Centre for many years considers it unsuitable for our purposes",

Chairman's Report

When elected to the Chair in April 2019, little did I think that during the course of the year, meetings and outings would have to be cancelled and members would be confined to their local patch for their 'birding' experiences. It certainly has been a very strange time. However, the important thing is that we and all those close to us have remained in good health and avoided serious illness. If you have lost friends and loved ones, then the Committee extend their deepest sympathy to you.

During the Winter months, the usual programme of monthly meetings, with invited speakers, was organised. Some changes had to be made when one speaker took up employment on one of the Scottish Islands and alternative arrangements had to be put in place. We are extremely grateful to those who stepped in to help, as we are to all those who gave presentations on a wide range of topics.

In June 2020, HQ took the decision that no further meetings could be held until at least the end of the year due to coronavirus. There must still be questions over meetings taking place during the early part of 2021. However, arrangements are being put in place to join with SOC Dumfries and SOC Stewartry for 'Zoom' presentations in October and November. Members will be informed of these on Borders page on SOC Web-site and by Mailchimp from HQ.

Since our last AGM, eight outings have been organised to four different locations in the Borders, and others in Northumberland, Lothian and Stirlingshire.

Unfortunately, a much looked forward to trip to RSPB Mersehead, Dumfries had to be cancelled due to weather conditions. All trips were well attended and thoroughly enjoyed. It is extremely unfortunate that we will not be able to organise any for this winter until further relaxation of lockdown has been announced.

The Discussion Group continued to meet during the winter months with about 10 members attending each meeting. The main topics usually centred around surveys to be undertaken, BirdTrack recording and progress with the annual Bird Report. The Discussion Group is open to all members and it is our intention that these should continue this winter through the use of 'Zoom',

Once again, we are indebted to Tom Brewis and his team for the production of an excellent Borders Bird Report for 2018. The Report for 2019, is now available and can be obtained from Malcolm Ross. The quality of the Report is extremely high. Don't miss out on getting your copy. Some copies from previous years are still available, at a reduced cost. A list of these will be circulated on Borders Bird News.

You will be aware that, during the past year, problems have arisen with Borders Bird News, our Yahoo Groups site. The site is still operational but it is not possible to send attachments and photos. Earlier this year, Tom Brewis set up the Google Groups site 'Whiteadderbirders' to assess its suitability as an alternative to Yahoo. For the most part, it has been found to meet our requirements. We now require someone to take on the management of the new site. There is a degree of urgency in getting this set up as the Yahoo site was the main means by which users (about 280) shared their birding experiences and for the Committee providing information about forthcoming events. HQ does send out Mailchimps, but with only about 150 members, these reach just over half the number compared to Yahoo.

At the start of lockdown, we were concerned that there would be a significant decrease in the number of sightings in the Borders, due to not being able to move around freely. However, the opposite has been the case. Between 1st April and 31st June, the total number of records entered on BirdTrack currently stands at 29570 compared to 19976 for the same period last year. The number of species recorded in that period remained about the same, though the number of sites visited fell.

I would like to thank all who have submitted their records to BirdTrack and to those who have sent David and I their sightings for us to enter.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all members and non-members who have attended events and helped out in any way, during the last 18 months. It has been a very different time for us all and we sincerely hope that it will not be too long until things return to a semblance of normality.

Martin Moncrieff

Update: BirdTrack records continuing to rise since last year

Chairman thanked HQ staff for all their work during lockdown

Secretary/Council Representative's Report

Council meetings now online.

Both upcoming conferences – Annual Club conference and Birdwatchers one in spring – both now online

Club is currently running a relatively small deficit.

Birding and Science committee working on more formal structures for Bird Recording and Bird reports. Proposed Bird Recorders meeting on hold until possible options become clearer

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer apologizes for errors in accounts as sent out and explains correction.

Corrected version attached as *SOC Borders Statement of Accounts 201920*

Treasurer highlights:

- cost of food provided at AGM.

- donation made to Ring Ouzel appeal for RSPB study

- purchase of spare lamp for beamer

Approval of the accounts
proposed by Mike Betts and seconded by David Parkinson.
Approved nem con.

Two further appeals received at start of lockdown: Langholm Moor buyout appeal and Seabird Centre at North Berwick. Do members wish to support them?

Sea Bird Centre now back up and running.

National Trust for Scotland has furloughed staff at St Abb's head.
Ranger's duty being split between St Abb's and Grey Mares Tail.
Keep a watching brief and support National Trust for Scotland

Further discussion of providing support for Langholm Moor
Donation of £100 approved.

Replacement of Borders Bird News

Yahoo site been running since 2007. 280 members but Yahoo have stopped posting of photos to site, features offered being restricted and it needs to be replaced.

We do have a What's App group, mainly used for reporting sightings, and Whiteadder Birders, a more general wildlife site.

Experience with Whiteadder Birders is that Google Groups would be suitable.

Tom Brewis happy to set up replacement for BBN

Item for next Discussion Group meeting

Tom to circulate criteria to form the basis of discussion.

Borders Bird Report

Some concern over increasing costs this year.

Tom Brewis looking for some sort of assurance from Committee that quality of Bird Report will not be reduced because of increased costs.

Suggests some form of float in order to subsidize cost of report if costs increase further—hopefully they will not.

Item for Discussion Group Agenda

Meetings via Zoom

14/10 together with Dumfries and Stewartry – Short-eared owls, Ben Darvill

11/11 with Dumfries and Stewartry – Pied Flycatchers

09/12 join Dumfries & Stewartry quiz, Edmond Fellowes

Logins to be sent out by HQ

No outings because of restrictions

Election of Officers

Agreed to increase Committee to 6 and to include at least one representative from Berwickshire and Peebleshire. At present all Committee members from 'central' area

Approved

The following are nominated as office bearers for 2019/20.

All were elected nem con.

Chairman:

Martin Moncrieff

Nominated: David Parkinson, seconded Sheila Horsburgh

Secretary and Council Representative:

Neil Stratton

Nominated: Mike Betts, seconded Harry Urquhart

Treasurer:

Richard Jackson (also Berwickshire)

Nominated: Martin Moncrieff, seconded David Parkinson

Bird Report Distribution:

Malcolm Ross

Nominated: David Parkinson, seconded Martin Moncrieff

Co-opted members of the Executive Committee

David Parkinson, Chair of Discussion Group

Nominated Mike Betts, seconded Martin Moncrieff

Editor of Borders Bird Report

Tom Brewis

Nominated; Gavin Patterson, seconded Harry Urquhart

Peebleshire

Harry Urquhart

Nominated: Sheila Horsburgh, seconded Martin Moncrieff

AOCB

None

Meeting ended 8.45 p.m.