

Norfolk Ornithologists' Association

Annual General Meeting 17th September 2022 at 3.00pm, in Holme Village Hall

Trustees present: Steve Newman (in the Chair), Peter Bangs, Jenny Barker, Keith Fox, Lucy Ferrer, David Gamble (Treasurer), Roger Skeen.

In attendance: Sophie Barker (Warden), Ann Newman (Minutes).

NOA members: Approximately 26 other NOA members were present.

Steve Newman began by welcoming members to the NOA AGM after a three-year gap caused by cancellation of meetings due to Covid-19 precautions. He outlined the agenda for the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence: Michael Rae, Emma Buck, Gary Elton, Doug Radford, Leo Smith.

2. The Minutes of the previous AGM

The last standard AGM was the one held in 2019. The meetings due in 2020 and 2021 had been cancelled in line with Charity Commission guidance, and reports by the Chairman and the Treasurer had been made available to members in both years. The normal approval process for Minutes would resume in 2023.

3. Election of Council Members

The NOA constitution states that every year, two Trustees must offer themselves for re-election at the AGM on a rotational basis. It has not been possible to do this since 2019, although the Trustees have confirmed the re-election of two of their number in both 2020 and 2021.

The meeting was asked to approve the re-election of all eight Trustees, with the re-election of two members on a rotational basis to resume from 2023. This motion was proposed by Ann Smith, seconded by Cat Buck, and approved by the meeting.

4. The Chairman's Report.

Steve Newman reported as follows:

Covid: The NOA's response continues to evolve, with the reserves and hides now open, but with restricted entry to the Observatory building and the ringing shed. The NOA has remained cautious, with events cancelled again this year, as many members are potentially vulnerable; the Moth Days and *Go Wild at Drove* were the main casualties. After conducting NOA business by circulation of papers and by virtual meetings, the Trustees have now resumed face-to-face meetings, though in Holme Village Hall rather than the NOA Office.

Personnel: There has been no change to the composition of the Council of Trustees since 2019. The Staff now comprises Sophie Barker, Emma Buck and Gary Elton, Emma having come on board since our last AGM, taking over from David Bratt in early 2020. Holme Bird Observatory has been open daily, apart from Christmas, and there has been regular coverage at Walsey Hills and Hempton Marsh, with help from volunteers.

General financial situation: The NOA has been fortunate to receive recent bequests totalling more than £500,000, from the estates of benefactors. This good news is offset by anticipated reductions in income over next few years, including reduction in agri-environment grants. We face the challenge of using our resources wisely and ensuring that they diminish as slowly as possible; it is our intention to be more pro-active in terms of fund-raising and membership recruitment, in particular playing to our strengths as a small friendly organisation, well placed to engage with the public.

Wildlife: Autumn migration 2021 at Holme had been described as “more than disappointing”, following an excellent autumn in 2020. This stemmed from persistent unfavourable Atlantic weather patterns, and counts of Yellow-browed Warbler were a striking example, with regular counts of up to 10 a day over a 2-week period in late September/early October 2020, whereas they were only seen on 3 days in 2021, with a maximum day count of 2. The problem is reflected in the numbers of new birds ringed in 2021, where the figures for Walsey Hills and for Hempton Marsh exceeded those for Holme Bird Observatory for the first time, thanks to an excellent effort by Emma Buck:

HBO	1027
Walsey Hills	1164
Hempton Marsh	1042

Hot weather and drought have been the dominant features of summer 2022. A particular worry now is Avian Influenza, the impact of which has already been seen.

Publications: The 2021 Annual Report had been completed on schedule and was being circulated during September. It had already reached many members ahead of the present meeting. The quarterly Newsletters continued to be published, containing bird news from the previous 3 months and additional items of news affecting the organisation; back-page articles over the past 12 months had covered *Ringing Buzzard chicks* (Emma Buck), *From the Archives* (events in September 1965 and February 1996), *A celebration of the life of Richard Richardson* (Moss Taylor), and *North Norfolk coast bio-diversity audit* (Sarah Juggins and Sophie Barker).

The Birds of Holme Bird Observatory 1962-2020 (TBOHBO): Publication of this book had been a major collaborative lockdown project between Dave Nurney as bird illustrator and Steve Newman and Sophie Barker as principal authors. It included accounts of the 345+ species seen at the Observatory since its foundation in 1962, and ran to 218 pages with almost 300 black and white illustrations. It had been printed by Witley Press in Hunstanton, and was published in July 2021. Over 190 copies had been sold to date, and copies had been lodged with major ornithological library collections.

The Birds of Redwell Marsh: a more modest project involved listing the 201 species seen in the wild state at Redwell Marsh since 1985. Once completed, it was planned to make the list available free to NOA members.

North Norfolk Coastal Group

NOA has joined this group, which is a Company Limited by Guarantee involving a range of landowners and NGOs. It is chaired by local farmer David Lyles and aims to provide the benefits of tackling challenges together; coastal erosion and biodiversity loss are good examples. NOA has made a significant contribution to a recent biodiversity audit, with the data collated by the University of East Anglia.

Infrastructure repairs: Major work has been done on the steps at Walsey and on the HBO boardwalk between the Observatory building and the coastal footpath. The latter involved additional work to ensure that Natterjack and Common Toads, that often hibernated below the boardwalk, were not damaged by the disruption; the NOA is very grateful to Gary Hibberd of NWT for his expert help with this. These projects were carried out by Norfolk Landscapes, with whom we have worked before.

Repairs to Broadwater Road: this work had been carried out by NWT earlier in the year, and had much improved access to the Observatory.

New Developments

We are currently working on three new developments:

- Solar panels at HBO: It was hoped to install an array of solar panels on the roof of the Observatory building. This would fulfil both environmental and financial objectives for the organisation.
- MOTUS receivers: It was hoped to install MOTUS receivers at both HBO and Walsey. These provide a new approach to tracking migrant birds and bats, complementary to ringing and satellite tagging.
- New NOA website: A new website was in preparation; it would have a radical new look, and would be structured around the blog. The technical work was being done by Tec Tamers, a computer services and web design company based in Thornham.

THANK-YOUS:

- Goldcrest Charitable Trust, who provided continued funding for our Assistant Warden based at Walsey and Hempton. The Trust has now ceased operating, but it had provided funding intended to last until early 2024.
- Rowhire Ltd, who provided funding that covered the costs of both printing and mailing our annual report packages.
- One Stop Nature Shop for their interest in supporting NOA through a generous new sponsorship offer.
- Moss Taylor and Cley Bird Club, who donated funds received at an event to mark the centenary of the birth of Richard Richardson. A new interpretation board is in place at Walsey.
- Bob and Jacky Gulliver, who packaged our Annual Report ready for mailing.
- My fellow Trustees – Pete Bangs, Jenny Barker, Lucy Ferrer, Keith Fox, David Gamble, Michael Rae and Roger Skeen - for their continued help and support.
- Dave Nurney, who once again provided a series of excellent illustrations to bring our annual report to life (not to mention his contribution to TBOHBO).
- Ann Gordon, who promoted our Annual Grand Draw once again, and also continued to collect used stamps - an additional source of revenue.
- Ann Smith, who continued as promoter of the NOA 200 Club. Many thanks to Ann, who is stepping down after six years.
- David Austen, who arranged PAT testing and kept an eye on our electrics.
- Ann Newman, who prepared the annual report for printing, as well as doing other administrative work behind the scenes.
- Peter Stephens, for voluntary work at Hempton Marsh, including boardwalk repairs.
- Callum Gibson for regular help to Emma at both Hempton and Walsey.
- Chris Bryant for regular help alongside Keith Fox.
- Jerry Brown for help with ringing, and Cat Buck for regular scribing at the Observatory.
- John Swallow for ringing work at Walsey.
- Iain Starke and Mike Rimmell, who have provided important census data at the Observatory on a regular basis.
- Help with plants and watering at Walsey has been provided by John Furse, Ben Clark, Peter Livermore, David Griffiths and Chris Goodie.
- Anybody I've failed to mention.
- All our members, for their continued support.

5. The Treasurer's Report.

David Gamble reported on the 2021 accounts, with highlights from the 2019 and 2020 accounts. The principal points to note were as follows:

- Funding from the Goldcrest Charitable Trust
 - Over the past few years, we have benefitted from donations from this trust.
 - It has funded the employment of an Assistant Warden over several years.
 - It also paid for Horace the Hilux.

- The final donation in 2021 was to fund the Assistant Warden for a further 3 years.
- However this trust has now closed.
- Legacies and bequests
 - In 2021 we received bequests of £254,500.
 - This followed a bequest of £274,496 received in 2019.
 - These funds have secured our work for years to come.
- Membership subscriptions
 - We continue to rely on you, our valued members, for the support you give with your subscriptions and additional donations.
 - Together with Gift Aid from the Government, this helps to pay for our day to day running costs.
 - In 2021 subscriptions and gift aid amounted to £30,781.
- Government Agricultural Grants
 - For the time being we continue to receive grants, despite the UK leaving the EU.
 - In 2021 this amounted to £10,365, so its potential loss would be a concern.
- Site maintenance
 - In the year we spent over £50,000 renewing the steps and boardwalks at Walsey Hills and the Obs.
- Cash reserves
 - At the end of the year we had cash reserves of £555,823.
 - This is spread over several banks to keep individual balances below the Financial Services Compensation Scheme ceiling of £85,000.
 - These deposits earned interest of £7,178 in the year.

The accounts for 2019 and 2020 can be viewed on the Charity Commission website. The accounts for 2021 will be submitted to the Charity Commission shortly.

6. New Promoter needed for NOA 200 Club

The 200 Club raises c £2,000 pa, mainly to help meet staff costs. The work of the Promoter involves recording renewals of club membership, organising quarterly draws, sending prizes to winners and submitting returns to the local borough council, keeping in touch with 200 Club members, and growing the Club.

7. Additional Trustee needed: Fund-raising specialist

Current Council members lack expertise in fund-raising on a large scale, and the Constitution allows us to appoint an additional Trustee. The individual appointed should have previous experience in securing funds from large donor organisations to be used for infrastructure projects and other activities. He/she would also be expected to attend Trustees' meetings and assist with general management of the NOA.

8. The Warden's Report

Sophie Barker showed the photographic wildlife highlights of the period from September 2019 to August 2022.

No other business being raised, the AGM concluded, and was followed by **refreshments**, which had been organised by Jenny Barker, with assistance from Pauline Gamble.