

Norfolk Ornithologists' Association

Annual General Meeting 2nd September 2023 at 3.00pm, in Holme Village Hall

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

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

NOA members: Approximately 15 other NOA Members were present.

Steve Newman began by welcoming members to the NOA AGM. He outlined the agenda for the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence: David Gamble (Treasurer), Cat, Helen and Chris Buck, Doug Radford.

2. The Minutes of the previous AGM

The Minutes of the AGM held on 17th September 2022 had been made available on the NOA website prior to the present meeting, and were also available on paper at the meeting. Acceptance of the Minutes was proposed by Terry Smith, seconded by Ann Gordon, and approved unanimously by show of hands.

3. Election of Council Members

a) Ratification of election of co-opted member:

David Agombar had been co-opted to membership of the Council in late 2022; his formal election as a Trustee was proposed by Michael Rae, seconded by Ann Smith, and approved unanimously.

b) Trustees offering themselves for re-election:

Roger Skeen and Peter Bangs offered themselves for re-election in accordance with the Constitution. Their re-election was proposed by Ann Gordon, seconded by Terry Smith, and approved unanimously.

4. Proposal to temporarily increase number of Trustees from 9 to 12

Steve Newman explained the background to this proposal. Currently there are 9 Trustees (Constitution specifies 5 to 9), who fulfil a variety of roles within NOA:

- Strategy, general management, financial management, fundraising.
- Health and safety, reserves maintenance, cover at Obs.

Seeking a temporary increase in the number of Trustees, from now to the end of 2025, would help with succession planning, enabling a smooth transition to new, possibly younger Trustees, and give them time to familiarise themselves with the NOA's requirements. The aim was to target individuals with appropriate skills.

The plan was formally proposed by Geoff Randall, seconded by Terry Smith, and approved by show of hands.

5. The Chairman's Report

Steve Newman reported as follows:

Personnel: The Observatory had been staffed primarily by Sophie Barker and Gary Elton, with regular help from Roger Skeen and other volunteer wardens, and had been open daily, apart from Christmas.

Assistant Warden Emma Buck had also helped at the Observatory, but had been based primarily at Walsey and Hempton. Emma had left the NOA in June 2023 for a new wardening post elsewhere in Norfolk. Following interviews held during August, Shannon Clifford had been appointed as a new Assistant Warden, to take up her post in September 2023. Again, Shannon would be based primarily at Walsey and Hempton, but would also be helping Sophie at the Observatory.

Covid and Avian Flu: Most of the usual events had been cancelled during 2022, but the Moth Days and Go Wild at Drove had been held again in 2023 as COVID declined. Avian Flu is a new challenge, resulting in changes to our working practices, particularly for ringing.

NOA Structure and Evolution: As well as looking at the membership of the Council of Trustees, we are looking at other ways of moving the NOA forward, whether by recruiting additional staff such as a part-time bookkeeper or administrator, by using external services, or by recruiting additional volunteer help.

New Website: The NOA has a new website, produced by TecTamers, an IT company based in Thornham. It has a radical new look, structured around the sightings blog, with a daily report of the birds recorded plus the daily moth catch during the period when the moth traps are run.

Observatory refit: There has been an overdue replacement of the office furniture, making work there much easier.

Infrastructure repairs near Observatory reserve: The section of the Coastal Footpath running alongside the reserve had been extensively repaired by the County Council, including a robust new boardwalk at the exit from the reserve. NWT had carried out major repairs to Broadwater Road and had acquired a grader to carry out running repairs to the gravelled section.

Work in progress: The NOA was still very interested in joining the MOTUS project, which involves tracking individually tagged birds on their migration routes. There were a number of technical and logistical problems to be overcome before MOTUS towers could be installed. We are also looking at installing solar panels at the Observatory and at Walsey Hills, to make the association more sustainable.

Wildlife: The Autumn migration in 2022 had not been outstanding, but was better than in 2021, when the winds were consistently from the south-west. There had been some good days for passerine migrants, but the effects of avian 'flu were becoming apparent, not only in deaths of birds but also in much reduced numbers of some migrants, with Great Skuas being a very striking example.

Bird ringing: Good numbers of new birds were ringed in 2022:

HBO	1905
Walsey Hills	1800
Hempton Marsh	918

The numbers at Walsey Hills and Hempton Marsh reflect the efforts of Emma Buck. There had been some hot dry weather again in June 2023, then cooler, but Redwell Marsh was dry again by mid-summer, as it had been in 2022.

2022 Annual Report: this had again been completed on schedule, and would be circulated during September, along with the Autumn Newsletter and tickets for the Grand Draw.

Quarterly newsletters: these include bird news from the previous 3 months, general NOA news and announcements, and a range of back-page articles. Recent Newsletter back-page articles had covered:

Ways to support NOA.

A review of the Birds of Redwell Marsh, with a total of 201 species seen over a period of 40 years.

Andrew Jamieson had provided a report on the conservation scheme at Drove Orchards, which had given rise to the wetland area near the Coal Barn, attracting many waders to the area.

The Autumn Newsletter included a 'From the Archives' item in which Jed Andrews had described the sighting of an Isabelline Shrike in October 1996, still the only record of that species at Holme.

NOA President: The NOA has not had a President since the death of David Oliver, but we are delighted to announce that musician David Gray has agreed to be our new President for three years in the first instance. David has been a regular visitor at the Observatory for many years. He has become a friend of the Association, and has helped us in a variety of ways. David is an avid nature lover, and many members will know about his work to support conservation, most notably his role as Patron of Curlew Action. We think it will be great for the NOA to be represented by someone well-known who understands what we do, and who is strongly committed to the conservation movement.

Wash Barrage Proposal: A piece of potentially bad news is a proposal to put a tidal barrage from Hunstanton or Holme to Lincolnshire. There is no planning application yet, but Centre Ports Ltd is proposing to construct a deep-water port near Skegness, and add-on features include a tidal barrage and road. One map on their site shows the barrage and road starting at Gore Point. Wherever sited, such a construction seems likely to kill The Wash as the UK's premier estuary for wading birds and to cause extensive flooding along the North and East coasts of Norfolk, with a further danger of fenland flooding behind the barrage. NOA has joined an Interest Group led by RSPB, NT, WWT, and the Wildlife Trusts, to make the case for conservation and wildlife in the area.

6. The Treasurer's Report

In the Treasurer's absence through illness, Steve Newman gave a general outline of the NOA's financial situation.

NOA Holdings as at 30/07/2023

Instant Access Accounts	£18,024
90 and 95-day Notice Accounts	£221,434
Term Deposits (1 to 3 years)	£289,325
Long-term Ethical Investment (CCLA)	£80,000
TOTAL	£608,784

The reason for this comfortable financial position is that, since 2019, the NOA has received three major bequests and a grant of £60,000 from the Goldcrest Charitable Trust.

Looking at the figures for the calendar years 2021 and 2022, which correspond with the NOA's financial year:

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u> #
INCOME		
Membership income	£30,451	£32,000
Miscellaneous income *	£11,987	£12,000
Agri-environment grants (BPS, HLS)	£10,365	£10,000
Investment income	<u>£7,178</u>	<u>£8,500</u>
Total (excl. donations and legacies)	<u>£59,981</u>	<u>£62,500</u>
 Donations and legacies	 £259,179	 £110,000
EXPENDITURE		
Salaries and wages	£51,475	£55,000
Miscellaneous costs **	£19,366	£22,000
Insurance and other governance	£5,062	£5,500
Fundraising costs	<u>£5,045</u>	<u>£5,000</u>
Total (excl. Infrastructure repair and replacement)	<u>£80,948</u>	<u>£87,500</u>
 Infrastructure repair and replacement	 £54,599	 £10,000

* Incl. Grand Draw, 200 Club.

** incl. postage, electricity, stationery, telephone...etc.

2022 figures are approximate.

Full accounts can be seen on the Charity Commission website, charity number 267670, but the situation can be summarised as follows:

- NOA has continued to receive the residue of two major bequests.
- Bank accounts and other investments look very healthy.
- Financial challenges include:
 - Inflation.
 - Anticipated reduction in income from agri-environment grants.
 - End of funding from Goldcrest Charitable Trust in 2024.
 - Ongoing gap between income and expenditure, of the order of £20,000-£25,000 p.a.

We are becoming more pro-active in terms of fundraising, recruitment of new members, and engaging with the public.

- David Agombar has been recruited as a Trustee, contributing specialist fundraising experience.
- A communication subgroup has been established, aiming to increase public awareness of the NOA's work.
- An investment subgroup has been established to ensure that our investments as efficient as possible.
- We may need to increase membership subscriptions again in the next two to three years.

David Agombar has drawn up a fundraising plan which looks at options such as:

- Approaching Charitable Trusts and Foundations, as well as high net-worth individuals.
- An annual appeal to members.
- Promoting legacies, which can be of enormous value to NOA.
- Increasing membership numbers.

David has drafted a Case for Support document which looks at what is special about NOA and what impact it delivers for wildlife.

Recently we have been concentrating on repairs and replacement of our infrastructure, and have secured funding for replacement of the disabled access ramp at HBO and also of the Heligoland trap there, the latter involving turning it to face east rather than west.

7. Thanks

- Goldcrest Charitable Trust, who provided continued funding for our Assistant Warden based at Walsey and Hempton.
- Rowhire Ltd, who provided funding that covered the costs of printing our annual report.
- Mike Williams for a further generous donation in memory of his brother Andrew.
- Bob and Jacky Gulliver packaged our Annual Report ready for mailing.
- Peter Stephens, for voluntary work at Hempton Marsh, including boardwalk repairs.
- Helpers at Walsey Hills, particularly John Furse and John Swallow.
- Helpers at *Go Wild at Drove*, particularly Ray Roche and Joan Fox.
- Ben Rackstraw and Mike Rimmell have gathered vital census data at HBO on a weekly basis.
- Andrew Birkett, for on-going data analysis on arrival and departure dates of migrants. A first instalment of this appears in the Annual Report which will reach members shortly.
- Dave Nurney, who provided his usual series of excellent illustrations to bring our Annual Report to life.
- 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.
- 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.
- Anybody we've forgotten.
- All our members.

8. New Promoter for NOA 200 Club required

- 200 Club raises c £2,000 pa, mainly to help meet staff costs.
- Volunteer needed to:
 - Organise quarterly draws.
 - Send prizes to winners and submit returns to BCKLWN.
 - Keep in touch with 200 Club members.
 - Grow the Club.

9. The Warden's Report

Sophie Barker showed the photographic wildlife highlights of the period from September 2022 to August 2023.

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