

Norfolk Ornithologists' Association

Annual General Meeting 6th September 2025 at 3.00pm, in Holme Village Hall

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

In attendance: Shannon Clifford (Assistant Warden), Ann Newman (Minutes).

NOA members: Approximately 25 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: Jerry Brown, Sophie Barker.

2. The Minutes of the previous AGM

The Minutes of the AGM held on 14th September 2024 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 Chris Buck, and approved unanimously by show of hands.

3. Election of Council Members

- a) Ratification of election of co-opted members:
Barrie Hunt had been co-opted to membership of the Council during the last year; his formal election as a Trustee was proposed by Ann Smith, seconded by Cat Buck, and approved unanimously.
- b) Trustees offering themselves for re-election on a rotational basis:
Jenny Barker and Michael Rae offered themselves for re-election in accordance with the Constitution. Their re-election was proposed by Ann Gordon, seconded by Pat Griffin, and approved unanimously.

4. Revised wording of NOA Constitution

The NOA Constitution states that the maximum number of Trustees is 9.

At the 2023 AGM, it had been agreed to increase this number to 12 until the end of 2025, to allow us to bring in some new younger Trustees. Having a larger group of Trustees had proved useful, providing more experience and a wider range of skills. Therefore, we would like to make a permanent change to a maximum of 11 Trustees.

Current wording: "The business of the association shall be conducted by a Council of not less than five nor more than nine members (with five forming a quorum), each of whom shall be a trustee of the association, elected by a majority vote at an Annual General Meeting."

Proposed new wording: "The business of the association shall be conducted by a Council of not less than six nor more than eleven members (with six forming a quorum), each of whom shall be a trustee of the association, elected by a majority vote at an Annual General Meeting."

Acceptance of the new wording was formally proposed by Seamus Griffin, seconded by Terry Smith, and approved by a unanimous show of hands.

5. The Chairman's Report

Steve Newman reported as follows:

a) Wardens and Reserves: Warden Sophie Barker has been side-lined by illness during the last year.

Assistant Warden Shannon Clifford has been spending more time at HBO this year, and she played the major role during spring migration.

Holme Bird Observatory is being prioritised as our Flagship Reserve. This is important for BOC accreditation, but less time is being spent monitoring and ringing at Walsey Hills and Hempton Marsh.

There is extra help from volunteers, particularly Roger Skeen, Ed Tooth and Jenny Barker, and Molly Brown will be working as a temporary Assistant Warden at HBO from mid-October to mid-December, to help cover the autumn migration and enable Shannon to take vacation in late November and early December.

b) Trustees: (see also item 4 above)

Trustees have met ten times in last year, including once at Pensthorpe to coincide with the Volunteers' Lunch and a virtual meeting during the winter.

David Gamble wishes to stand down as Treasurer after nearly 20 years, and we have been actively seeking a replacement. We hope soon to announce that we have someone willing and able to take over from David.

Work is in progress to review the Council structure and the roles played by individual Trustees.

c) NOA Finances:

Bank / Building Society accounts and other investments are very healthy, thanks in part to Gifts-in-Wills (legacies) and the generous response to the land purchase appeal in 2024.

NOA Memberships amounted to 931 at the latest count.

But NOA's financial challenges include the end of regular funding from the Goldcrest Charitable Trust in 2024 and the anticipated severe reduction in income from agri-environment grants. There is an ongoing gap between guaranteed income and essential expenditure, made worse by inflation.

Active fundraising will be needed to enhance financial sustainability, especially looking at increasing revenue from Trusts, Foundations, Individuals, and Gifts-in-Wills.

d) Membership Subscription Rates:

There is a big gap between guaranteed income and essential expenditure (typically £30,000 p.a.). This is offset by Gifts-in-Wills, but these are unpredictable. The Trustees would like to run the Association from income as much as possible, to avoid drawing down capital.

Membership subscription rates were last raised in 2019.

Bank of England figures show that goods and services costing £10 in 2019 now cost £12.89, i.e. 29% inflation since 2019, and we believe it's necessary to raise membership subscription rates again to improve our financial sustainability. We have therefore decided to increase our membership rates as follows:

New Membership Rates from 1st January 2026

	OLD	NEW
Individual (per annum, minimum)	£25	£30
Joint (per annum, minimum)	£30	£40
Family (per annum, minimum)	£35	£45
Individual (life)	£400	£500
Joint (life)	£500	£600

A flyer has been included with the Annual Report, asking members who pay by Standing Order to change their rate of payment accordingly from January. Those who pay by other methods will be advised accordingly.

e) Ringling Summary For 2024

	Adults	Pulli	Recaptures	Total
HARPLEY GARDEN SITE	359	4	315	678
HEMPTON MARSH	230	62	101	393
HOLME BIRD OBSERVATORY	723	1	243	967
PENSTHORPE CES	343	0	338	681
WALSEY HILLS	1,116	7	473	1,596
EIGHT OTHER SITES	516	12	92	620
TOTALS	3,287	86	1,562	4,935

Walsey highlights included 7 Pied Flycatchers, 7 Yellow-browed Warblers, and the first Redstart since 1971

f) Novel Monitoring Techniques

We have been unable to progress the use of Motus tagging and tracking during the last 12 months. However we have continued to use thermal imaging as an aid to catching birds at night. A particular example was a Finnish-ringed Jack Snipe caught at Redwell Marsh in early 2024; an article in the 2024 Annual Report by Shannon Clifford and Ed Tooth gives details of this.

g) Sponsored Birdwatch 2024

This took place on Christmas Eve, organised by Irene Boston, with Roger Skeen, Steve Newman, Dave Nurney, and Sophie Barker also taking part. 102 species were recorded, meeting the target of 100.

h) Second NOA Vehicle:

A second-hand Peugeot van had been purchased so that Assistant Warden Shannon Clifford could safely transport necessary equipment between the NOA's reserves.

i) Replacement Boardwalk at HBO

The stretch of boardwalk adjacent to the Dell Hide had been replaced.

j) Annual Report for 2024

This had now been printed, and would be circulated in September 2025.

6. The Treasurer's Report

David Gamble reported on the 2024 accounts as follows:

Income for 2024 was £170,122, up from £108,861 in 2023

The income was made up from:

Donations and legacies	£85,330
Memberships and Gift Aid	£37,777
Agri-environment grants etc	£21,772
Investment interest	£13,560
Other income	<u>£11,683</u>
	<u>£170,122</u>

The donations included contributions to the Land Purchase appeal, which had been very generously supported. Although the agri-environment grants look very healthy, the figure includes a one-off grant of £11,000 for repairs to the fencing at Hempton.

NOA's holdings on 31st December 2024 were as follows:

Instant access, notice and term accounts with banks	£362,929
Ethical investment fund	<u>£215,879</u>
	<u>£578,808</u>

The formal accounts for the year would shortly be lodged with the Charity Commission, and could then be seen by searching the Commission's website for charity number 267670.

7. Thanks

Steve Newman thanked the following on behalf of the Trustees and Wardens:

Everyone who has supported our Land Purchase Appeal.
Cley Bird Club: donation towards purchase of hedge trimmer.
Bethany Lingwood: donation towards new gate at HBO.
Bob and Jacky Gulliver: once again packaged our Annual Report for mailing.
Jennifer Ullman: advice on management and personnel issues.
Volunteers helping with monitoring and ringing at HBO: Roger Skeen, Jenny Barker, Jerry Brown, Keith Fox, Ed Tooth, Ben Rackstraw, Gary Elton, Claudia Gooch.
Help with the HBO moth traps: Julie and John Stroud, Chris Mills, Keith Huggins.
Robin Parker: help with feeders and keeping an eye on Hempton Marsh.
Irene Boston: 2024 sponsored birdwatch.
Lucy Ferrer: invaluable help with human resource issues.
Dave Nurney: usual excellent illustrations for annual report.
Seamus Griffin: many excellent photos.
Ann Gordon: promoter of our Annual Grand Draw once again.
Kath Trinder: taking over as 200 Club Promoter.
Pete Bangs: regular health and safety checks around the reserves.
Keith Fox, Chris Bryant: ongoing care of our infrastructure.
Ann Newman: administrative work behind the scenes, including Annual Report preparation.
Anybody we've forgotten.
All our members.

8. The Assistant Warden's Report

Shannon Clifford showed the photographic wildlife highlights of the period from September 2024 to August 2025.

Until the end of 2024 she had been based mainly at Walsey, and had ringed 726 individual birds in the period September to November, mainly Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Chiffchaff and Blackcap, finches being very numerous around the feeders. Since January 2025 she had been based primarily at HBO because of Sophie's ongoing health problems, but had been able to do habitat maintenance at Walsey, where the new Peugeot van had been of great assistance. She had been heavily involved in the new colour-ringing scheme for Yellow-browed Warblers, focussing on their movements in Western Europe. Only three had ever been ringed before at Walsey, so they had been hopeful of catching one, but it had been an exceptional year for Yellow-browed Warblers, and they actually ringed seven. They had been surprised by the extent to which the individuals had remained in the area after first being caught but they had yet to hear of any recoveries.

Other birds had included a Great Spotted Woodpecker, which are rarely caught in the mist nets, also Brambling and Kestrel; they also caught 11 Meadow Pipits, more than had been caught before, also a Grey Wagtail and a Stonechat which had not been ringed at Walsey before.

Looking at ringing at Holme, 479 birds had been caught during autumn 2024, including Pied Flycatcher, Redstart, Bearded Tit and Kingfisher, as well as Woodcock. 660 individuals were caught

during the period January to August 2025, which is quite a good total given that nets were not up for much of the year. This included 80 Chiffchaffs, many of which had “pollen horns” acquired while foraging for insects, which is particularly common in birds migrating from North Africa. Two Bullfinches were also caught in Holme Village, where four Barn Owl chicks were also ringed, three of which were in the nest box that had been used in 2023.

Apart from ringing records, there had been other interesting sightings in autumn 2024, including 30 Cattle Egrets, Jack Snipe and Kentish Plover, while Shore Larks were seen regularly on the beach, and a Glaucous Gull was in the area for a while. There had been good views of a Black Guillemot on the sea, but for the third year in a row there had been few sightings of Bonxies.

Species recorded in spring 2025 included a probable Thrush Nightingale, Black Redstart, drake Garganey, a White-tailed Eagle making a striking contrast with a Red Kite, and a good build-up of Whimbrel numbers.

As autumn 2025 began there were good sightings of a growing creche of Shelduck chicks, a Spoonbill preened in front of the Broadwater hide, and recently Wheatear, Whinchat, Spotted Flycatcher and Pied Flycatcher were seen.

There had been good records of moths caught in the traps daily, and Shannon expressed thanks to the Volunteers who had been helping with these records.

She ended with thanks to everyone who had helped her during the past year.

9. Any Other Business

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