

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Wiltshire Ornithological Society. This is our second AGM over Zoom. Hopefully it will be the last in this format and we can once again meet face to face safely. Thank you for joining us this evening

1. Firstly, I would like to thank all of the committee for their hard work in serving the society for the past year. In 2020, Covid-19 provided the Committee with a situation that none of our forebears have ever encountered. Initially we wrestled with regard to how the Society could operate and whether Indoor and Outdoor Meetings should go ahead. As we know now, these decisions were taken away from us and all events involving face to face contact were cancelled.
2. In particular I would like to thank our Secretary, David Little. David is hugely respected by the Committee and throughout the year does a very professional and efficient job for the Society. With the inception of the Indoor Meetings over Zoom, David has worked very hard to arrange the meetings, this is particularly admirable because this is not Davids preferred area with which to work.
3. Hobby: Thanks to the Hobby editorial board of Paul Castle, Pete Combridge and Stephen Edwards for editing the Wiltshire Bird Report, to all the text writers, the artists and photographers, and especially to Nick Adams, the outgoing County Recorder.
4. Claire Jones took on the role of County Recorder and has a great team in place digitising old records. We are in a much better position than we were a few years ago. Recording platforms have changed and we had to change to be able to collate and manage the data. We are now receiving more records than ever.
5. Attendance of Indoor Meetings has declined in recent years but the decision to hold them over Zoom was a new venture and it proved very successful. The first such meeting was held in December and was very well virtually attended.
6. Outdoor Meetings Four Outdoor Meetings took place early in the year. These were to Barbury Castle, then to both Needs Ore and Blashford Lakes in Hampshire and the 15 members who went to the New Forest on 8 March may not have realised that within two weeks they would be in lockdown.
7. WOS News: Thank you very much to the WOS News Editorial team: Christine Johnson, Alison Rymell, Jenny Elvin and Bruce Maxfield for the continued high standard of our quarterly bulletin. It is always an interesting read but never has it been as welcome as last year. As birders we had to restrict our activities to our gardens and short walks from home for a considerable period of time and there was a very different but interesting slant to some of the articles. Thank you to those of you whom contributed articles, artwork and photographs, and please keep them coming.
8. Finance: Over the years we have been blessed with a very high calibre of Treasurer. Ted Smith continues that fine tradition and our finances are in rude health. Our reserves are in fact a little high and we are keen to support conservation projects so if you have any bird-related conservation ideas please let us know.
9. Conservation Projects: Covid restrictions lifted just in time for us to monitor Tree Sparrow nest boxes. Unfortunately, the long spells of wet weather had caused significant mortality but still over 170 pairs used our nest boxes, fledging over 1300 young.
10. A new way of surveying farmland birds has involved using a thermal imager at night. Donations from the Marlborough Downs Space for Nature, a Grant from the North Wessex Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty provided most of the funding. Visit Pewsey Vale had arranged a series of walks to top the fund up but these were cancelled due to Covid. Finally the fund was topped up by a local farmer to enable us to buy a thermal imager. This has been used to survey farmland at night recording good numbers of Skylarks and Corn Buntings but more importantly, we are learning about how birds use the various habitats and this provides information to landowners as to how to manage their land. We took two farmers out to show them birds using their land at night. In time, we will take a wider range of people out on guided walks to see birds at night, it is a truly magical experience!
11. Jonny Cooper has started a project to try to save the Curlew in Wiltshire. Survey work in 2019 showed that Curlew suffered an 80% decline in the Braydon Forest in 25 years. Jonnys project will aim to ensure more accurate reporting of pairs, nest protection and fitting birds with tags to learn about their movements in the breeding season.
12. We were due to hold the first Wiltshire Birdwatching Open Day in April at Langford Lakes. Alison Rymell had worked incredibly hard to organise it but sadly it had to be cancelled. As we inch forward on our

path to normality, I hope that we can go ahead with this event next year. It should be a great way for us all to get together and hopefully we can also engage with a wider audience and gain new members.

13. Web Site: Thanks to Gareth Hawkes our webmaster who is doing a very sound job managing our website and continuing to protect it from cyber criminals. Thanks also to Graham Deacon for maintaining the Latest Sightings page and has done so, diligently for many years.