

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 47th Annual General Meeting of the Wiltshire Ornithological Society. This is our third AGM on Zoom but it is the first year for three years that we are enjoying a Spring without being locked down. Throughout the lockdown periods, for many of us it has been our enjoyment of birds that has got us through. With the lovely weather we are currently enjoying, and the air being filled with bird song many of us feel a lot more optimistic than we have in recent years and watching Tree Sparrows displaying at nest boxes really lifted my heart today. This AGM brings us back in line with the normal time of year for our AGM and hopefully signifies a continuing return to normal.

1. Firstly, I would like to thank all of the committee for their hard work in serving the society for the past year. Once again it has been a strange year for the Committee with all meetings held over Zoom and we do look forward to the day when we are able to meet in person again.
2. Every year I thank David Little for his support as our Secretary and I do so most sincerely again. David is a true rock for me, the Committee and the Society. He manages the administration of the Society in an incredibly efficient manner. Over the years, the Society has been blessed with brilliant Secretaries and David is a match for any of his predecessors.
3. Hobby: Thanks to the Hobby editorial board of Paul Castle, Stephen Edwards and Bill Quantrell for producing the Wiltshire Bird Report, to all the text writers, the artists and photographers. Our annual report is a great read and compares very favourably with other county reports.
4. Claire Jones is doing a fantastic job as County Recorder, ably assisted by a very good team of volunteers. As you will hear in the Recorders Report, the number of bird records received has reached record numbers and the team do an incredible job in processing them all.
5. Mike Hamzija has served the Society well over many years as a member of the Records Committee and previously also as Ringing Recorder. Mike has now stepped down from the Records Committee and we thank him for his support and work over the years.
6. Andrew Bray has served on the committee for several years and more latterly has also taken on the role as BTO Representative for Wiltshire. Due to health reasons, unfortunately Andrew has had to step down from both roles. Thank you Andrew for your work and we wish you best wishes for the future.
7. Indoor meetings have currently been replaced by Zoom meetings that have been very well attended with up to 70 people linking in. There is nothing like meeting up face to face, both for the audience and for the Speaker but the advantage of Zoom meetings is that we can attract Speakers from outside of the County. As a Committee we decided to hold more Zoom meetings to provide a better service to the members in difficult times. Sue Wilthew is in the unique position of being the first Indoor Meetings Organiser never to organise an indoors meeting! Sue has moved to Cornwall and has stepped down from the role. This role is now vacant and is more important to the membership than ever before so please get in touch if you have an interest in this role to enable Zoom meetings to continue.
8. Outdoor Meetings October saw the welcome return of Field Meetings with the first meeting at Chittoe Heath. Further meetings were held at Langford Lakes and Shearwater in November and Swindon STW in December. The Outdoor Field Meetings really are popular events and meetings with restricted numbers are often over-subscribed. Thank you very much to the Field Trip Leaders and special thanks to Granville Pictor for organising a good and varied programme as always.
9. WOS News: Thank you very much to the WOS News Editorial team: Christine Johnson, Alison Rymell and Bruce Maxfield for the continued high standard of our quarterly bulletin. The variety of articles is extraordinary and that is all down to you, our members. Please keep them coming to keep giving us all such an interesting read.
10. Finance: The role of Treasurer is pivotal for the Society and Ted Smith is doing a brilliant job that includes not only administering the accounts but also providing advice about reserves

and undergoing audits with regulators such as Entrust who provide us with grant money to fund conservation projects.

11. Conservation Projects: Once again Covid restrictions threatened to stop us monitoring Tree Sparrow nest boxes but restrictions did lift in time but sadly, the long wet winter caused another decline. In the past two years Tree Sparrows have declined by 50% across the county but the summer of 2021 was successful with pairs raising on average 9 young per pair compared with the usual average of 8-8.3, and over 1000 young fledged from our nest boxes..
12. The Curlew project run by Jonny Cooper has really raised the profile of this iconic species across the county. The project had a major success when they colour-ringed an adult in the Blakehill Nature Reserve in the Spring of 2021. This bird was subsequently resighted in December 272km at Portscatho in Cornwall. This is the first record of a Wiltshire Curlew outside of the county and starts to give us an idea of their movements.
13. Membership. Frank Mogford does a sterling job of managing membership applications. Over the years there have been many dedicated attempts to increase the membership, there are a lot more people out there who are interested in birds who really ought to be WOS members. We made what some would say is the brave decision to enter the world of social media and in July 2021 we created a Twitter account @Wiltsbirdclub. The Twitter account already has 396 followers. It seems to have worked because at the end of last year we had 462 members whereas the same time this year we had 482 members.
14. 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, Our website receives a lot of attacks and it is down to the strong defences set up by Gareth that the site is protected. Thanks also to Graham Deacon for maintaining the Latest Sightings page. Grahams effort is phenomenal, he receives about 20 emails of sightings per day and he updates the sightings page about 15 times per day which takes a total of about 2 hours. His efforts are valued by our members and the sightings page gets between 250-400 hits per day.
15. And finally, like many bird clubs and societies WOS has struggled to attract members from the younger generation. We only have a few younger members but we do have Izzy Fry and Charlie Murphy who are passionate about birdwatching, other wildlife and conservation. They have provided us with great ideas and advice that may help us get more of the younger generation interested in birds and also WOS. Some of these ideas will be put into action at the forthcoming Wiltshire Bird Fair that we are running in partnership with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. It will be on 24th April at Langford Lakes and I would like to thank Alison Rymel and Jonny Cooper for their great efforts thus far in planning the event. The Open Day is a first for the Society and promises to be a great day so please come along and take part, and of course bring your children and grandchildren!