

## Chairman's Report 2022/2023

It is my pleasure to present my seventh annual report as Chair of the Lothian branch of the SOC. This report will be tabled at our AGM on 11 April as part of our final indoor meeting of the current season.

Unfortunately, I am not able to be with you at the AGM. My family has been invited to a wedding in Malaysia. I hope to take a few days off whilst there, from family duties, to go into the rain forest for a short bout of tropical birding.

Your Branch Committee, together with volunteers and long-standing supporters, have worked hard to provide a range of outings, discussions, talks and bulletins throughout the year.

My thanks go to Branch committee member, Mike Thornton, and to Kathryn Cox from SOC headquarters at Waterston House, for contacting our speakers and putting together an excellent programme for our indoor meetings.

Since the commencement of our winter indoor meeting programmes we have enjoyed the following talks:

September Rick Taylor – 'Update from the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project'

October Daniel Johnston – 'Black Guillemots'

November Steve Urquhart – 'Doing Bird: SOC archive recordings at HMP Perth'

December Ron Summers – 'Purple Sandpipers'

January Darren Woodhead – Adventures with a brush and binoculars'

February Lucy Mitchell – 'Tracking our flying visitors: Use of Motus technology in the UK'

March Ruth Briggs – 'Introduction and Allegro'

and coming up

April Phil Bysh – 'Birding Up and Down the Gambia River'

We have also run our monthly birding walks. My thanks go out to Hilary Maxfield and David Parmee for leading the walks in January and February. I was able to join the January walk around Linlithgow Loch and on to Kinneil lagoons but sadly was not able to join the group who visited Musselburgh and Levenhall Links in February.

I was pleased to lead the March walk along the coast between Barns Ness and Skateraw. Fortunately, the wind kept away and we were able to see a good selection of birds including a smart-looking Stonechat and Reed Bunting side by side. It was encouraging to see so many new faces join us on the walk.

The Branch runs on volunteers, from our County Recorder, Stephen Welch; to Mark Holling who coordinates the Wednesday Discussion Group; to the Committee who help plan and run our indoor (and outdoor) programme for members.

I would like to thank the Branch Committee for their steadfast support over the past year. There is a lot of behind the scenes work that goes into making our programme successful.

David Parmee has been an immense help in running the technical aspects of our monthly indoor programme, liaising with speakers, and compiling the bi-annual Lothian Bird Bulletin. David has also taken on the responsibility for coordinating our outdoor programme (but we really do need to find someone else to take on this role). Thank you, David, for the huge amount of time and effort you put into making the Branch run smoothly.

I must also thank Stephen Hunter, our Treasurer, who once again balanced our books. Stephen has provided technical support for our audio-visual equipment at our new venue, the Cornerstone Centre at St John's Church. Stephen has also been involved in the publication of the Lothian Bird Report for longer than I can remember.

My thanks also go to Gill Parmee who selflessly organises the teas and coffees at our monthly meetings. My final thanks go to Hilary Maxfield for her continuing support and for liaising with the Cornerstone Centre to make sure that our booking continues to be reserved.

Mark Holling continues to run the influential and important monthly Discussion Group. I understand that the group may be turning their attention to monitoring Kestrel numbers in our area.

Mention must also be made of the amount of work and dedication put into his role as County Recorder by Stephen Welch. This is a reminder that part of our remit as a Club is to engage in bird recording.

Thank you to all of our members for contributing throughout the year, either in your participation at events or for volunteering.

As the SOC is your organisation can I thank those members who took part in our survey conducted by the SOC Development Office, Jane Allison. If you have any comments to make, or wish to see any changes to our programme then please do let either myself or another Committee member know.

Richard Leslie

April 2023