



SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

ANNUAL REPORT

2018/19

A larger print (A4) version of this report is available from the SOC website or a hard copy can be posted on request
www.the-soc.org.uk/about-us/annual-report

SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

Annual Report and Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 March 2019

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Office Bearers

President: Ian Bainbridge
Vice President *Birding & Science*: Jeremy Wilson
Vice President *Management & Infrastructure*:
Lesley Creamer
Honorary Secretary: David Heeley
Honorary Treasurer: Andrew Thorpe

Office bearers are also members of Council

Council Elected Members

Elected at Club AGM (year of election/re-election):

Will Cresswell (2017)
Bob McGowan (2018)
Chris Wernham (2016)

Elected at branch AGMs:

Ayrshire – David Rackham
Borders – Neil Stratton
Caithness – Angus McBay
Central Scotland – Rick Goater
Clyde – Zul Bhatia
Dumfries – Alex Banwell
Fife – Elizabeth Irwin
Highland – Pete Gordon
Lothian – Richard Leslie
Moray – Melvin Morrison
North-East Scotland – Alan Knox
Orkney – Helen Aiton
Stewartry – Jeremy Brock
Tayside – John Campbell
West Galloway – Geoff Sheppard

Honorary Presidents

Roy Dennis
Frank Hamilton

Honorary Members

Dave Allan
Dougal Andrew
Ian Andrews
Stan da Prato
Iain Gibson
Mike Harris
Angus Hogg
Andrew Macmillan
Vicky McLellan
Daphne Peirse-Duncombe
Ron Summers

Independent Examiner

AW Scotland CA
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Edinburgh EH2 4JW

Solicitors

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Investment Advisors

Brewin Dolphin Securities
10 George Street
Edinburgh EH2 2PZ

SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

Annual Report

For the year ended 31 March 2019

Council's Report

The Council has pleasure in presenting its report for the year ended 31 March 2019. This report is prepared in accordance with the Charity's constitution and the Statement of Recommended Practice – Accounting and Reporting by Charities, and complies with applicable law.

CONSTITUTION

During the reporting period, the SOC operated under the Charity's constitution as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), as it stood at 31 March 2019 and which was last updated on 27 October 2018. The management of the SOC is the responsibility of the Council whose members are elected and co-opted under the terms of the constitution.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the SOC are to advance the education of the public in the study of birds in Scotland, and in furtherance thereof, but not otherwise:

1. To promote the study and documentation of Scotland's birdlife.
2. To promote interest in wild birds.
3. To support the conservation of birds and their habitats in Scotland.
4. To provide a focus for anyone with an interest in, and for information relating to, the study of birds in Scotland.
5. To encourage the practice and appreciation of the visual arts of natural history.

There have been no changes in objectives since the last annual report.

REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

Council

This was the first year of the Club operating under its new structure, with Council welcoming the new President, Ian Bainbridge, supported by two Vice Presidents, Jeremy Wilson (Birding and Science) and Lesley Creamer (Management and Infrastructure). The re-structuring was facilitated by the formation early in the reporting period of an Appointing Panel, who received applications, interviewed candidates and made proposals to Council for taking to the AGM.

Four Council meetings were held at RSPB Loch Leven, Kinross, with some items of business also conducted by email. Council welcomed the return of Bob McGowan as an elected member while Alex Banwell was welcomed as the new representative for the Dumfries Branch, Rick Goater for Central Scotland, Zul Bhatia for Clyde, Elizabeth Irwin for Fife and Pete Gordon for Highland. Outgoing President, James Main, was thanked for his sterling work during his tenure, and Lesley Creamer, Roger Gooch, Iain Gibson, Paul Taylor and David Bain were thanked for their important contributions to Council over the years as they stepped down as branch representatives. All Council members, by law, are Trustees of the Charity.

Much of the business during the year focused on the Club's strategic direction, governance, and finances. The new structure prompted a readjustment of the Management Committee as well as the decision to form a committee dedicated to looking at the SOC's birding and science interests. These latest changes, along with the progress being made by the Strategic Planning Group and

the Finance Committee, will greatly enhance the sound running of the Charity. Indeed, in July, the Club hosted the first Local Bird Recorders' Conference in almost ten years, organised by Stuart Rivers. The meeting was a success, resulting in a number of areas for development, which will be carried forward by the Birding & Science Committee. Another significant achievement was the development of the Club's mobile app, *Where to Watch Birds in Scotland*, which was preparing for launch at the end of the reporting year (see p7). The app is a superb way of the Club extending its reach and meeting its charitable objectives and congratulations are due to Alan Knox, Martin Cook and Jane Allison for their excellent (and ongoing) work on the project.

The app provided the theme of the 2019 SOC Annual Conference and a small working group set about organising a programme of speakers to present a broad perspective on the chosen title for the event, 'Scotland – A Special Place for Birds'. Attendance at the 2018 event in Aviemore was excellent and Council was particularly encouraged to see a sharp rise in the number of young birders taking advantage of the Club's special student discount – one way the SOC helps to nurture a future generation of field workers and conservationists.

The approved minutes of Council meetings are available to view or download from the SOC website under the 'About Us/Staff, Committees & Office Bearers' tab.

Strategic Planning Group

Council's Strategic Planning Group (SPG) is formed of four Office Bearers (President, Vice President *Birding & Science*, Hon Secretary and Treasurer) and Council members Chris Wernham and David Rackham. The group met on six occasions during the year, having identified four priority areas approved by Council in June:

- Engagement with birds and birding
- Bird recording and science
- Communication and outreach
- Wildlife art

In support of these themes, the remit and membership of a new Birding & Science Committee were approved by Council in March, with a first meeting scheduled for August 2019.

In addition, proposals for a conference focused on the SOC branch network were agreed and this event is now planned for 2020. Detailed proposals for priority work in the areas of communications and wildlife art remain in development. The SPG also undertook reviews of the SOC's Constitution, of arrangements for recognising exceptional individual contributions to our charitable objectives, and of the SOC Risk Register, with the recommendations of these reviews approved by Council.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee met three times during the year. Doreen Main had served on the Committee for one year and stood down in November, to be replaced by Alex Banwell (Dumfries branch). Council thanks Doreen for her involvement since the formation of the Committee and we are pleased to welcome Alex to the team. In March, Melvin Morrison advised that he would have to resign from the Committee for health reasons. We are grateful to Melvin for his active involvement and the experience he brought to discussions and we wish him well.

One of the main items of business during the year was the updating of the accounting system at HQ, which had been in use since the move to Waterston House. The Finance Officer, Mairead Lyons, sought advice from several sources and eventually it was agreed by the Committee that we would use an updated version of the existing Quickbooks software. The upgrade will allow us to submit HMRC tax returns online and also allows more flexibility in terms of access, enabling the Treasurer and other designated members of the Finance Committee to view the accounts and draw down reports. The new system will be operational from 1 April 2019.

Membership and Club development:

The total number of members of the Club in the year to 31 March 2019 was 3309 (where family and joint memberships are each counted as two individuals), which represents a small increase on last year, reflected across over half of the branches (Figures 1 & 2).

Figure 1. Total number of members

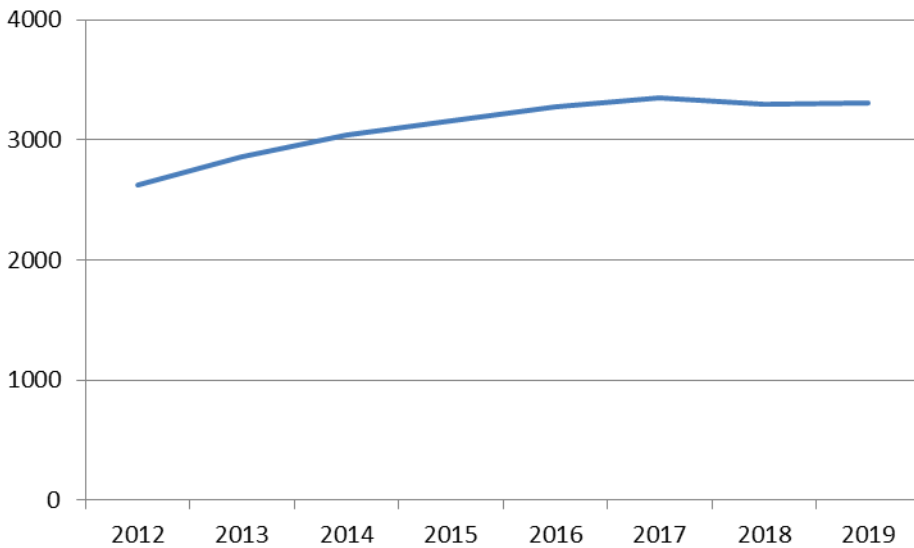
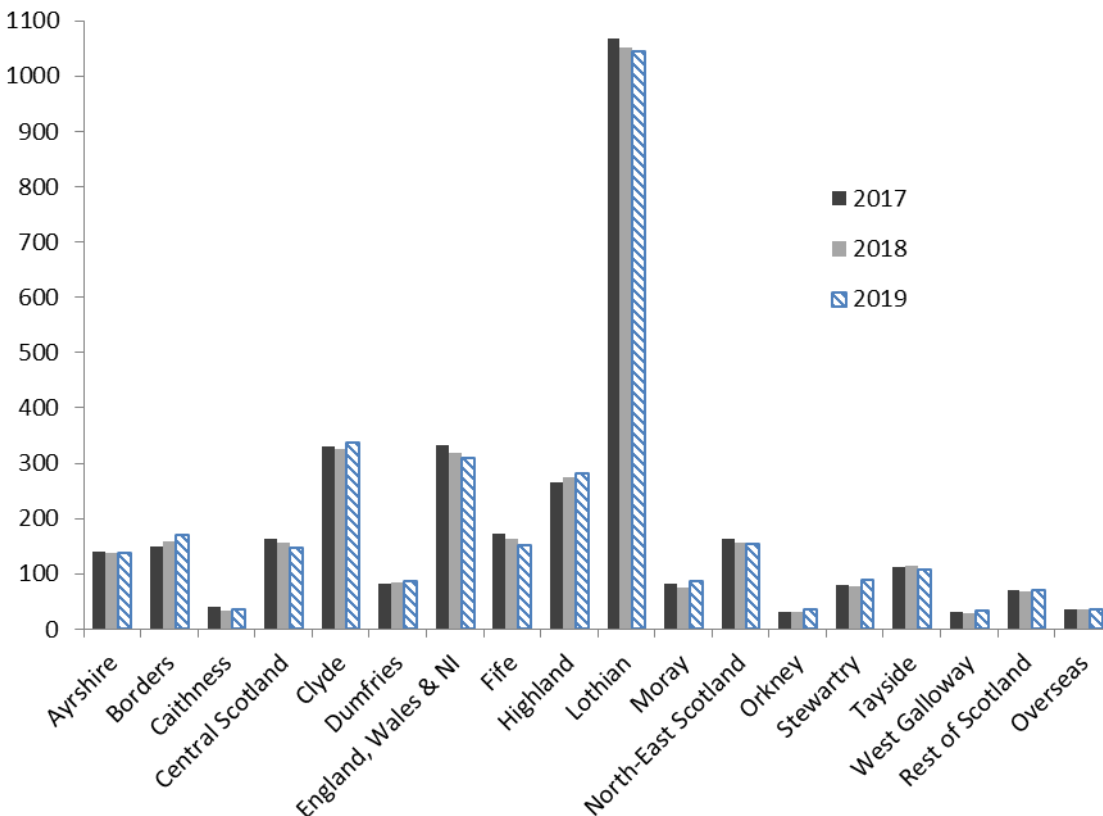
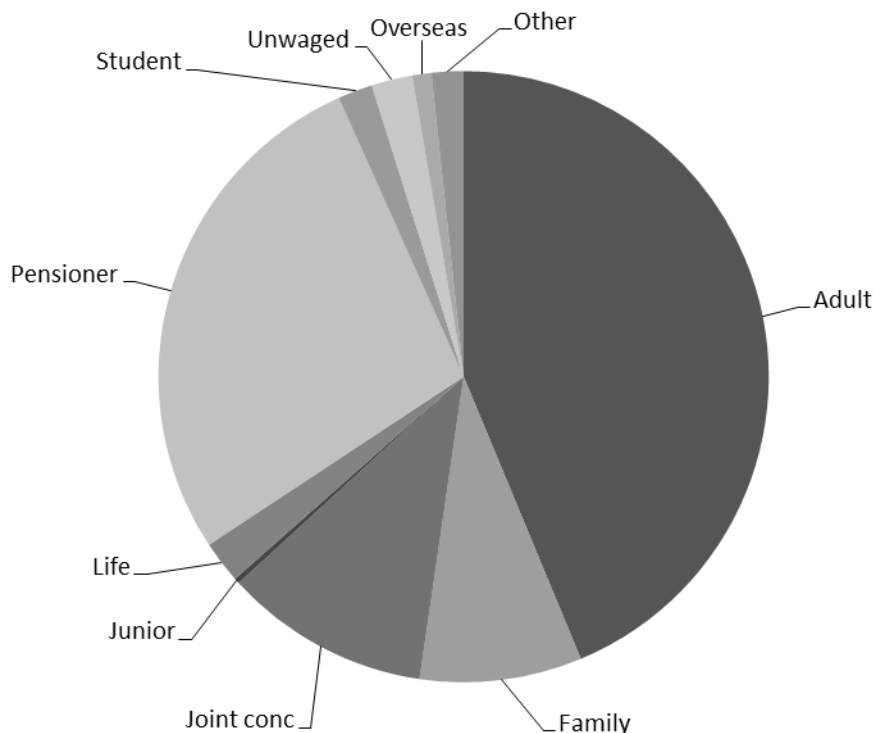


Figure 2. Total number of members by geographic locations



The breakdown of types of membership mirrored that of previous years, with Adult subscriptions representing the largest segment and proportions largely remaining stable compared with last year. The number of Student, Pensioner, Life and Family subscriptions experienced a small increase, while Joint Concession remained unchanged.

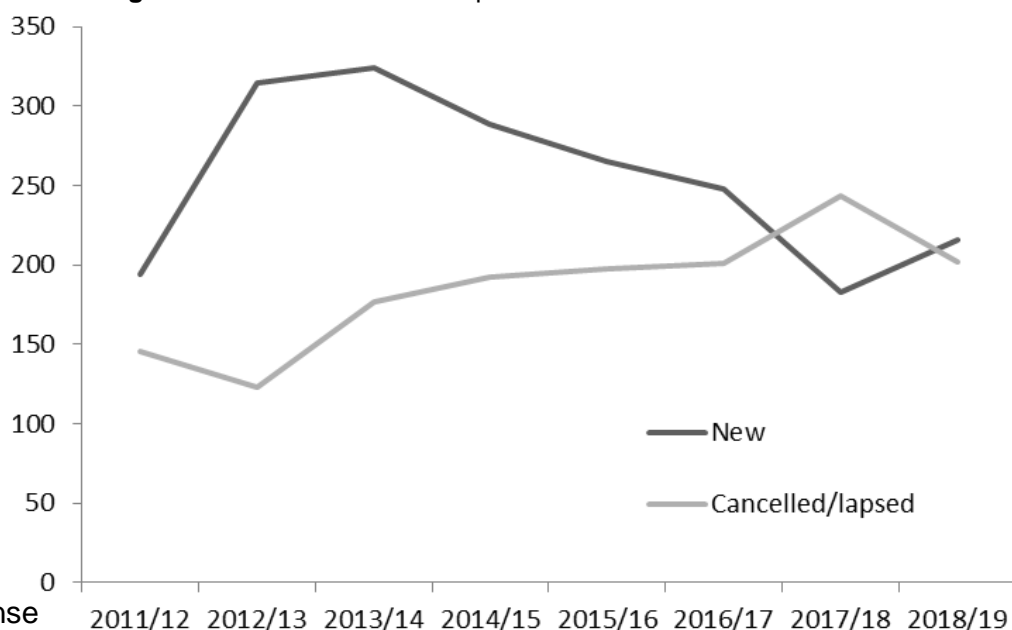
Figure 3. Membership by category at 31 March 2019 (based on 2772 subscriptions, as opposed to individual members). The category 'Other' includes Bird Recorders, Staff and Honorary memberships.



Council welcomed the increase in new memberships, which were up by 18% to 216. A key contributing factor to the increase is likely to have been the re-design of the Club's website in January 2018, given that this was the source of 75% of the new memberships. Equally encouraging was the reduction in membership losses, down by 17% to 202. An analysis of these losses revealed that a relatively small proportion (around 20%) involved members *actively* cancelling their subscription.

In most cases, a reason for cancellation was not provided but where one was given, financial circumstances or insufficient use of membership were cited. Sadly, over 10% of the losses were attributable to members passing away. The bulk (nearly 65%) of the losses were lapsed subscriptions, where no renewal payment was received despite reminder correspondence, or a Direct Debit was cancelled without any instruction or any response to investigative follow-up.

Figure 4. New and cancelled/lapsed members



The Club's website flourished throughout the reporting year with over 37,700 unique users visiting the site (up 6% on the previous year), amassing over 158,000 page views. The vast majority (82%) of views were from within the UK, as expected, and there was a roughly even split between male (54%) and female (46%) users. Approximately 80% of users were new to the site, which is an endorsement of the platform's high Google ranking. Browsers aged 25-34 years old were the most commonly recorded visitor demographic. The top pages visited were the Home page followed in popularity by Birding in the Lothians, Events, Local Branches, Online *Scottish Bird Report*, About us and Where to Birdwatch.

With the site firmly bedded in, the Club's Development Officer, Jane Allison, shifted her focus to another major development, the Charity's first ever mobile app, *Where to Watch Birds in Scotland*. Working alongside volunteers Martin Cook (Moray & Nairn Local Recorder) and Alan Knox (Council member, Library Chair and North-east Scotland branch member), the group sought to bring the project to completion, after two years of groundwork.

Work on the technical front began in July with Glasgow-based app developer Mucky Puddle. With a clear understanding of the Charity's aesthetic (Mucky Puddle had worked on the SOC website redesign) and a comprehensive brief, the project hit the ground running and the initial design phases progressed quickly. Simultaneously, Martin, the app's Editor, began making contact with every SOC branch Secretary and Local Bird Recorder in Scotland, outlining the proposal in more detail and appealing for support across the network. Building the systems that would enable the app to be updated (including the addition and removal of sites) was a complex and time-consuming process but a necessary one to ensure a system fit for purpose.

With the development stages nearing completion, Jane then set to work on an extensive high-profile marketing campaign, which resulted in free pre-launch press coverage – BBC *Out of Doors*, BBC *Wildlife*, *Bird Guides*, *Bird Watching*, *Rare Bird Alert*, *Scottish Field*, *Go Explore* (Caledonian McBrayne) – and extensive coverage secured for post launch – *Birdwatch*, *Bird Guides*, *Scottish Wildlife* and *British Birds*. Immediately following the launch, just after the end of the reporting period, the social media coverage was on a level the Club hasn't experienced before and there was overwhelming endorsement from across the birding world including Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Seabird Centre and the young conservation network, A Focus on Nature. In addition, a number of organisations promoted the app on their websites including Visit Scotland, Scotland's Environment, Argyll Bird Club, Arran Birding and Fat Birder. Following a successful application to Caledonian McBrayne, the ferry operator offered exposure for the app via the company's Marine Awareness Programme, with SOC invited to become a partner in the scheme. The final promotional push was the generation of a QR code for the app, which will feature on printed app promotional literature, to facilitate instant download.

The app was made financially viable thanks to the generous support awarded by *The Birds of Scotland* Fund and through legacy donations left to the Club by members. The project also benefitted from a financial contribution from Glasgow Natural History Society. Council thanks the Local Bird Recorders, SOC Branch Secretaries and other volunteers across the country who contributed to the project by helping to coordinate and/or produce the hundreds of site descriptions. Without this tremendous support, it would not have been possible to present the birding community with this fantastic free resource. A full list of acknowledgements and contributors can be found on the SOC website at www.the-soc.org.uk/app.

Given the importance of legacy income in facilitating development projects and allowing the Club to plan for the future, an eye-catching postcard was produced and circulated to members with the December issue of *Scottish Birds*. The card served as a simple order form for members to complete and return to Waterston House, via a pre-printed freepost address, to request a detailed information pack on leaving a legacy to the SOC.

One such project that continues thanks to legacy income is the Young Birders Training Course (YBTC), run by the SOC in collaboration with the Isle of May Bird Observatory. The scheme

received 13 applications for the 2018 course, with six young enthusiasts selected to spend a week in early July on the Isle of May learning essential bird survey skills and techniques. Facilitating the course were SOC volunteer, Alison Creamer, and Isle of May Bird Observatory committee members, Mark Oskien and Stuart Rivers, with additional expertise provided by SNH and CEH staff based on the island.

In September, the YBTC was shortlisted for a coveted Nature of Scotland Award (NoSA) in the Youth and Education Award Category. Jane Allison, Stuart Rivers and the President, James Main, attended the shortlisting reception, which was hosted by Claudia Beamish, MSP, at the Scottish Parliament. Alison Creamer and Stuart Rivers attended the formal Awards Dinner at the Sheraton Hotel, Edinburgh, in late November, alongside Jane, who also manned a promotional stand for the Club throughout the event's drinks reception. Unfortunately, the project was unsuccessful in winning the award but Council commended the team on the project reaching the finals.

A detailed description, review and evaluation of the course over its lifetime was featured in the December issue of *Scottish Birds* (Vol 38, p342-44). An analysis of the results of a detailed survey of past participants on the course served to underline the Club's continued investment in the project. Furthermore, the scheme was starting to attract interest from other like-minded organisations keen to support the initiative and in January we were approached by British Birds Charitable Trust (BBCT) offering to provide assistance towards the cost of travel expenses for participants on the 2019 course, in the hope that such financial aid would open up the opportunity to applicants living some distance away from Fife. Council is grateful to BBCT for this gesture.

Jane was also involved in facilitating a meeting with some young birdwatchers that took place in a Glasgow café in November. Working alongside SOC Clyde members, Zul Bhatia (branch Chair) and Kevin Sinclair, the aim of the meeting was to brainstorm ways that the SOC can better engage, support and develop the younger generation of birders (*Scottish Birds*, Vol 39, pp47-8). One immediate outcome of the session was the creation of a Facebook Group 'SOC Youth Connect', providing a platform for the sharing of relevant Club developments and initiatives, and other interesting opportunities, as well as acting as a sounding board for garnering advice on new ways of reaching this audience.

The SOC continued to support the efforts of the UK-wide youth nature network 'A Focus on Nature (AFON)' by helping to promote the group's new regional platform 'AFON Scotland', hosted on Facebook (*Scottish Birds*, Vol 38, p159).

As part of HQ's ongoing effort to support branches and their activities, Jane Allison accepted an invitation by the Clyde branch for her to attend the committee's quarterly meetings. She also attended the Dumfries branch's committee meeting in November. Jane was able to inform committees of HQ and wider Club developments as well as offering support and advice on branch development matters.

In November, incoming Central Branch Chair, Rick Goater, met with Jane for an introduction to local branch operations and activities, and for an overview of the support available from HQ. One major outcome of the meeting was the decision to carry out a branch survey, which was emailed (or posted) out to members in January, using the online tool, Survey Monkey. The questionnaire was designed to gather feedback on how the Club might help local members get more out of their SOC membership. The response rate was 30% and the invaluable feedback included several offers of help with running the branch. At the end of the reporting period, Jane had begun to digest and graph responses in order to present a detailed written analysis to the branch for discussion at a future committee meeting. North-East Scotland branch followed suit, working with Jane to deliver a similar survey to members in March.

Council recognises that the local branch network is an important element of Club life for many members and that it plays a crucial role in helping the SOC to meet one of its charitable objectives of promoting an interest in wild birds.

Branch Activities

Indoor meetings, which run between September and April, and the programme of year-round field trips are an important aspect of branch activities, allowing members to share their interest in birds and increase their knowledge. As well as being social events and an opportunity to discover new sites, the outings help to develop bird ID skills, making for more informed observers in the field 'watching over our birds' by submitting sightings to Local Recorders or entering records on BirdTrack. The SOC is fortunate to have a bank of excellent speakers who kindly volunteer their time to give talks on their specialist subjects to the Club's branches, some agreeing to do 'mini tours'. One such speaker, SOC member, Graham Wren, had been giving talks to members around the country for many years. Sadly, after returning from a short tour in the autumn with his talk on 40 Years on the Farne Islands, we learned of Graham's untimely passing (*Scottish Birds*, Vol 39, p22).

New General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), which came into effect on 25 May, resulted in the majority of branch communications to members being administered from Waterston House, in order to secure the storage and use of members' contact details. However, during the year, a number of branches took up the offer of training from Jane Allison and are now fluent in using the online marketing software, Mailchimp, which allows email content to be produced locally, while HQ still retains control of the mailing lists.

Ayrshire

The branch enjoyed another good year of talks, remarkable in its variety covering everything from Ring Ouzels, tagging Lesser Black-backed Gulls to 'Flittermice', and geographically from East Lothian to the Caucasus. Once again, the group ran a good range of outings, including a coach trip to Dorset. The highlight of the year was the publication of a double issue of the *Ayrshire Bird Report*. One issue of the local e-newsletter, *Stonechat*, was circulated to members in September.

Borders

The branch reported increased attendance at the winter talks and good turnouts for most of its outings. The highlight of the year was the publication of the regional atlas, *Birds in South-east Scotland 2007-13* (see pp22-23). Discussion Group meetings were held monthly during the winter and new members of the Club are always welcome to go along. Borders Bird News, the local Yahoo news group, which has been operating for 12 years, continues to be well used, with over 270 members.

Caithness

The focus for volunteers of the Caithness branch this year was carrying out maintenance work on the Loch of Mey bird hide, and monitoring Greenland White-fronted Geese, whose numbers have been in decline over the last few years. The group gave a fond farewell to long-standing Chair, Julian Smith, who had headed up the branch for ten years before handing over to Donald Omand.

Central Scotland

Branch outings continued to be well attended and the programme included a trip to Loch Tay and to Black Devon wetlands, and a Perthshire 'safari' to Glen Quaich and the Dunkeld area. In January, branch members were given the opportunity to help to shape the future of local activities when a survey was circulated (see p8). The response was encouraging and the feedback invaluable, with a number of ideas resulting from the survey set to be implemented. At the group's AGM in November, Rick Goater took over as branch Chair from Roger Gooch who had served in the role for over six years and previous to that, eight years as Secretary.

Clyde

Attendance at the indoor meetings continues to rise, no doubt as a result of the introduction of reminder emails circulated by the branch Secretary, using the Mailchimp software. As a result, the branch committee and Jane began research into an alternative meeting space that could accommodate larger numbers, with a view to having a new venue in place for 2020. Clyde branch field trips, resurrected last reporting period, continued to prove popular and the autumn programme

included a visit to Aberlady Bay and Waterston House. There was a huge effort by volunteers who helped convert MS Word data from old bird reports into Excel format, which was then entered onto BirdTrack by Clyde Assistant Recorder, Val Wilson. At the Branch AGM in April, Zul Bhatia was formally appointed as Branch Chair, having been co-opted to the role the previous autumn. Reflecting his hands-on, pro-active approach, Zul, alongside fellow committee member, Liz Parsons, manned a small SOC stand at the touring musical show, 'Northern Flyway', in September at the Beacon Arts Centre. Zul was also involved in steering an exciting new initiative aimed at engaging young birders (see p8).

Dumfries

Outings to Southernness/Mersehead and to Loch Ryan were successful as was the mini break to Morecambe. Unfortunately, a trip to the South Solway had to be postponed due to inclement weather. There was an excellent programme of talks for the winter programme, with Hayley Douglas' presentation on Lesser Black-backed Gulls being particularly well received. Committee member, Christine Dudgeon, designed an attractive new poster template for promoting the meetings locally. The branch was invited to have a stand at the WWT's wader weekend at Caerlaverock and also shared a stand with Stewartry Branch at the South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre's wildlife recorders' conference. John Riddet took over as branch Chair from Brian Smith, who had held the post since 2006.

Fife

The branch ran ten outings during the year, alternating between Saturdays and Sundays to allow as many people as possible to attend. Some trips were local, others ventured further afield to places like Inversnaid, and some involved weekends away (Norfolk & Suffolk and Islay). Equipped with promotional materials from HQ, the branch organised an SOC presence at the Eden Estuary Nature Reserve's 40th Anniversary event at Guardbridge in September (*Scottish Birds*, Vol 38, p332). The annual Christmas meal (now in its eighth year) at Fairways Restaurant was moved to a lunch-time slot, to facilitate a larger turnout. The Fife newsletter continues to be sent out four times a year and photographs and articles are always welcome.

Highland

Members enjoyed another season of first-class talks including a presentation on Capercaillie and one on tracking Canna's seabirds, given by Bob Swann, and which attracted a record turnout of 66 people. With the help of HQ, a new poster was designed for promoting the meetings, in a bid to maximize attendance. The branch has continued to hold both weekend and Thursday outings, including a trip on the Ullapool-to-Stornoway ferry where Shearwaters and Minke Whales were highlights. A successful bird race was held in January and was enthusiastically supported by eleven teams from throughout the Highlands.

Lothian

Having the largest membership of the Club presents both opportunities and challenges – challenges that, on occasion, mean that it has to limit numbers to its events, but also opportunities to draw from a great deal of birding experience to help plan talks. The varied programme of monthly outings continues to be popular and increasingly well attended, and included a week of excellent birding in Norfolk. As reported in 'Borders' above, the Lothian branch welcomed the arrival of the new regional bird atlas. Two issues of the branch newsletter Lothian Bird e-News were circulated in the reporting year.

Moray

Moray Bird Club, the Moray branch of the SOC, held six meetings during the year, with talks spanning a wide range of topics – from Moths of NE Scotland and Shags to Short-eared Owls, Cuckoos and Ospreys in West Africa. Meetings were attended by an average of 30 people. The group held several outings, with trip destinations ranging from Speymouth, Findhorn and Loch Spynie to Tomintoul for a successful search for Ring Ouzels. Other activities included the annual Dawn Chorus outing at Loch na Bo and two bird races – the first, in May, was followed by a very enjoyable social evening at the home of Roy Dennis and his wife, and the second took place in

January. Martin Cook's birdwatching course for beginners, run over five separate days, was very well received and he is willing to offer this again, albeit in a different format. In November, the branch agreed to host the 2020 Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference and by the end of the reporting period, a venue had been secured and the local organizing committee, in consultation with BTO Scotland, was well on the way to having a draft programme organized.

At the branch's 2018 AGM (March), David Law took over as Chair from Roy Dennis. A photography competition among local members saw the winning entry (a Dotterel image) being used as the header for the branch email communications from January. An article on Moray Bird Club featured in the December issue of *Scottish Birds* (Vol 38, pp338-40)

North-east Scotland

A successful programme of winter meetings covered topics as diverse as Capercaillie conservation and the Shiantis to a talk on bats. A raffle in January raised £130 and the branch produced two e-newsletters, circulated in spring and autumn. The request for singing Chiffchaff, Stonechat and Whinchat records has been successful for the second year. Following the example of Central Scotland, in March, NE Scotland opted to have HQ conduct a survey of branch members in March. Alan Knox took over as branch Chair from Jenny Weston. Founder member of the North-east Scotland group and Honorary member of the Club, Adam Watson, sadly passed away in January.

Orkney

The Club's Northernmost branch hosted four talks during the year: Bean Geese, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, The effect of a changing climate on nest building by Blue Tits, and a talk by wildlife artist Keith Brockie. Colin Corse took over as Chair from Peter Slater in October.

Stewartry

The branch ran several outings in the year although unfortunately some had to be cancelled owing to adverse weather conditions, and others due to poor uptake. Several volunteers manned a stand at the South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre conference in Dumfries. It was unanimously agreed to continue supporting LIPU (Italy's equivalent of RSPB), and David Lingard, the UK representative of LIPU, gave a talk about its work to the branch in March. This was followed by the annual raffle to raise funds for the branch.

Tayside

A full programme of field trips, which continued to offer mid-week outings as well as Sunday events, was organised in conjunction with Angus and Dundee Bird Club as part of SOC Tayside's ongoing close partnership with ADBC. While most outings take advantage of the wealth of local birding sites, the group also travelled further afield, to Fife, Lothian and Aberdeenshire. In addition to talks on seabird counts and tag and tracking technology, attendees at the branch meetings received insights into the wildlife of the Perthshire estate of Glen Teuchat and were given illustrated accounts of birding in exotic climes such as the Balearics and the Chatham islands (New Zealand).

At the branch's December meeting, long-standing member and former branch Treasurer, Bob McCurley, was presented with a Branch Recognition Award for his outstanding contribution to the local group. At the time of writing, we were saddened to hear of Bob's passing (June 2019).

West Galloway

In addition to talks given by speakers doing the South West branches 'tour', organized by SOC HQ, talks arranged by the branch included a fascinating look at the evolution of bird plumage by Jeni Grover. Jeni and partner Steve also led some very successful field trips for the branch in January and March, with a few designed to tie in with WeBS counts. David McGhie took over as Chair from Alan Johnstone.

Waterston House

The Club's headquarters was open to members and the general public throughout the year, seven days a week. The number of visitors during the reporting period was just over 10,900, up by 6% on the previous year. For the first time, we were able to remain open in the period between Christmas and New Year (excluding the UK bank holidays) thanks to staff member Stuart Rivers, who was willing to provide cover. The exercise proved worthwhile, with a footfall of just under 250 visitors.

The art programme was a mix of the old and the new, as Laura Gressani oversaw the delivery of exhibitions that had been planned by Dave Allan – John Threlfall, Colin Woolf & John Knox, Michael Warren, Keith Brockie, Lisa Hopper and Lucy Newton – while organising the programme for 2019, which up to the end of the reporting year included a group show of botanical art and wildlife printmaking and a solo exhibition by returning artist, Jane Smith. As well as building on existing relationships with past exhibitors, Laura focused on attracting new artists and art forms to the gallery. In particular, sculpture was given more prominence, with work by Ellen McCann accompanying the botanical art exhibition, and small sculptures by local artists appearing in the shop. Indeed, the role of the shop in supporting art and related items received some attention, leading to increased sales of greetings cards and small craft gifts. This year, we trialed a 'Christmas Shop' comprising a dedicated space in the retail area for a variety of festive art and craft gifts, sourced by Laura. Overall, the items were well received by visitors and the trial prompted a move to reserve a section of the shop for similar ongoing seasonal or themed stock.

The exhibition programme was accompanied by a number of special events that were all well attended: A demo by Colin Woolf (painting with Woodcock pin feathers), a talk by Keith Brockie (on the wildlife of Glen Teuchat estate in Perthshire, ahead of the publication of his new book) and two botanical art workshops. The interest in the art programme can be gauged by the growth of its mailing list, which now stands at almost 1,300 contacts. Many of these art enthusiasts are not SOC members, reflecting the role art can play in helping the Charity to reach a wider public.

The gallery continued to be used on a weekly basis by Aberlady Craft Group, monthly during the winter for the SOC Lothian Discussion Group evening meetings, and in October and March by the Lothian branch for its evening indoor meetings. Until February, the space was also used by a local yoga instructor to run a weekly morning class outwith the gallery's opening hours. In May, HQ was the venue for a marriage vow renewal ceremony for a local couple (SOC members) and 60 guests.

However, it is the library that accommodates the increasing number of room bookings. As well as being used extensively for SOC committee/work group meetings (Management, Finance, Strategic Planning, Appointing Panel, and South-east Scotland Bird Atlas), the library was hired by a number of other individuals and organisations: Laurie Campbell (two photography workshops), East Lothian Council (bi-annual meeting of Aberlady Bay Advisory Group), RSPB Scotland (Conservation Policy and Conservation Science team meetings), Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust (trustees' meeting). In September, we were privileged to have hosted a three-day workshop for 26 delegates from across Europe, representing government, NGO and academic organisations with interests in Curlew conservation, as part of the AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Eurasian Curlew.

Regular events, advertised locally to the general public, included two optics demo days (May and September) and a series of goose events in the autumn – two evening talks to coincide with watching the Pinkfooted Geese come in to roost at the nearby nature reserve, and an early morning walk to see the birds leaving their roost site. The goose events were well attended, with the walk fully booked, and were again delivered by local Aberlady Bay warden, John Harrison (East Lothian Council).

After a hiatus of six months, HQ's programme of guided walks started up again in August, organised and led by experienced bird ID skills trainer, Scott Paterson, whom many will also know as SOC Perth & Kinross local bird recorder. During the reporting period, Scott led seven courses

(blocks of four walks, including weekend and mid-week options) and six individual walks, all of which booked out (only one course in September and a one-off outing to Hogganfield Loch, Glasgow, were cancelled owing to insufficient uptake). To maximise the learning opportunity, numbers on the walks were limited to eight and the feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with Scott's friendly and accessible instruction and his wealth of bird knowledge rating consistently highly.

The much-admired garden continued to wow visitors and inspire local naturalists: East Lothian Council Countryside Rangers used the site as a venue for its Discover Moths events and in late autumn, Waterston House was invited by Buglife International to be part of the Pollinator's Way, resulting in a free supply of wildflower seeds to complement the existing meadow planting. From mid-October through Armistice Day, the grounds were decorated with hand-knitted poppies and a life-size figure holding a Carrier Pigeon, organised by the local Craft Group as part of a wider 'Aberlady Remembers' project.

As well as serving as an attractive visitor centre, events venue and meetings space, Waterston House is the administrative hub of the Club. The start of the reporting year saw some personnel changes, following Dave Allan's retirement in April: Laura Gressani officially took up post as the new Art Exhibitions Coordinator and Stuart Rivers was contracted as Birding Officer, providing the weekend cover. Both Laura and Stuart quickly settled in to their respective posts and have brought a wealth of expertise and new ideas to the team.

A major undertaking for admin staff at the start of the reporting period was processing the response from the Club's appeal earlier in the year to members and non-member contacts to provide us with their consent to allow us to continue sending email communications, following new data protection legislation ('GDPR') that came into force on 25 May. The response from members was encouraging and was a clear indication of how engaged our supporters are with the Club's activities. Members were presented with options to sign up to a variety of mailing lists for email notices and reminders which spanned Club news, HQ news & events, third party news, and branch activities (indoor meetings, outings and newsletters). Detailed guidance was circulated to branch officials and Local Bird Recorders, explaining the intricacies of the new procedures.

We are fortunate to have a dedicated team of regular volunteers at Waterston House, helping with tasks such as welcoming visitors, general housekeeping, DIY, gardening, and assisting with myriad tasks around the office. We are grateful to all of our volunteers, some of whom brave the city bypass or take a long bus journey to spend a day each week helping out wherever needed, assisting with the smooth-running of HQ operations. As a thank you, SOC staff organised some festive fun in the form of a Volunteers' party in December. A buffet lunch was followed by a variety of games that were well received. Twenty-five volunteers attended, including the Club's two Vice Presidents, Jeremy Wilson and Lesley Creamer, and Honorary Secretary, Dave Heeley.

Management Committee

The Committee met three times during the reporting year to discuss issues relating to the general running of the Club headquarters, including building maintenance and staffing. The Committee welcomed the appointment of Laura Gressani and Stuart Rivers (see 'Waterston House' above) following Dave Allan's retirement in April. Dave was given a fitting farewell from staff, local members and artists at the preview for John Threlfall's show. The Club is grateful to Dave for his many years of service and the pivotal role he played in putting HQ's art gallery on the map and encouraging scores of beginner birdwatchers through the guided walks he organized and led.

Following changes to the Constitution and elections at the October AGM and with the agreement of Council on the make-up of the Committee, the Vice President *Management & Infrastructure*, Lesley Creamer (Dumfries), serves as the Management Committee Chair. The President is now an *ex officio* member as is the Chair of the Library Committee. The Honorary Secretary and Honorary

Treasurer are *ex officio* members. New ordinary members Fiona McLeod (Clyde) and Caroline Gordon (Fife) replace Doreen Main and Mike Martin to whom grateful thanks were extended for their many years of service and advice.

One of the Committee's priorities has been to develop an effective and consistent approach to staff reviews and the process was duly initiated at this year's appraisals in January, with further refinement planned for January 2020. Other important developments were the formation of a work group set up to create a policy and procedures for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults involved in SOC activities. Work also began on drafting a suite of HR policies, which will replace the outline statements that currently accompany staff contracts.

George Waterston Library

The library aims to meet the varied needs of members, users, visitors and staff and this has been achieved in a number of different ways this year. The book collection continues to be used for wide ranging requirements from browsing the shelves for a good read to research for specific projects. On occasion, users have found publications that are not available elsewhere in the country. The 76 people who signed the Users' log sheet recorded positive experiences, referring to the collection as 'important' and 'thorough'. The attractive space that the book collection inhabits is always appreciated and, as such, it has proved popular as a venue for business meetings and conferences and for teams working on new publications (see p12). Readers often refer to the books on site but 35 chose to borrow in the reporting year, a small decline on last year's figure of 39. This reflects the trend within the library sector towards online resources. In order to address these challenges, the library continues its efforts to promote the collection online; the SOC catalogue is already available on COPAC, the national library database, and will transition to COPAC's improved digital platform, NBK, in the summer of 2019.

We have participated in a number of commemorative occasions this year. The Committee installed two memorial plaques, one in the art gallery in honour of Donald Watson and a second in the library commemorating George Waterston (*Scottish Birds*, Vol 38, p254). In late autumn, when the HQ participated in the 'Aberlady Remembers' WWI project, the library displayed excerpts from George Waterston's birdwatching notebooks written during his time as a POW. On a more personal level, a family visiting the library referred to the Isle of May log books to find the entries they had written in the 1970s as small children. The archive continues to receive interesting and varied donations, with particular examples being a notebook and annotated ephemera belonging to the late 19th/early 20th century pre-eminent Scottish ornithologist, William Evans, and a pair of Dungeness ringing pliers. Donations such as these highlight the uniqueness of the SOC's archive and the Library Committee is keen to make this material readily accessible to members and the wider community. Extensive work has taken place this year to prepare the Club's audio material for submitting to the British Library's sound archives digitization project.

Regular contributions to the Club's funds are made through the second hand bookshop. In September, a special half-price book sale was held, with additional shelving put in place in order to be able to display the entire second hand stock. An impressive £3,077 was raised (*Scottish Birds*, Vol 38, p330).

The library is managed by our efficient Librarian, Susan Horne, with the support of dedicated volunteers and the Library Committee. Susan would especially like to thank: David Clugston (Honorary Librarian and second hand book donations), Lesley Creamer (library catalogue), Ian Elfick (archives), Norman Elkins (additional shelf material), Dr John Law (journals) and Jean Torrance (administration).

Alan Knox, Chair

Scottish Ornithologists' Club

Notice of the 83rd Annual General Meeting
Saturday 23 November 2019, 1715hrs
Atholl Palace Hotel, Pitlochry



AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 82nd AGM, 27th October 2018
3. Annual report 2018/2019
4. Annual accounts 2018/2019
5. Revised SOC Constitution
6. Recognition of contribution to the SOC's activities and objectives
7. Re-election of Council member: Chris Wernham
8. Election of Honorary Secretary: David Lindgren
9. Appointment of an independent financial examiner
10. AOCB
11. Date and place of next meeting

NOTES TO THE AGENDA

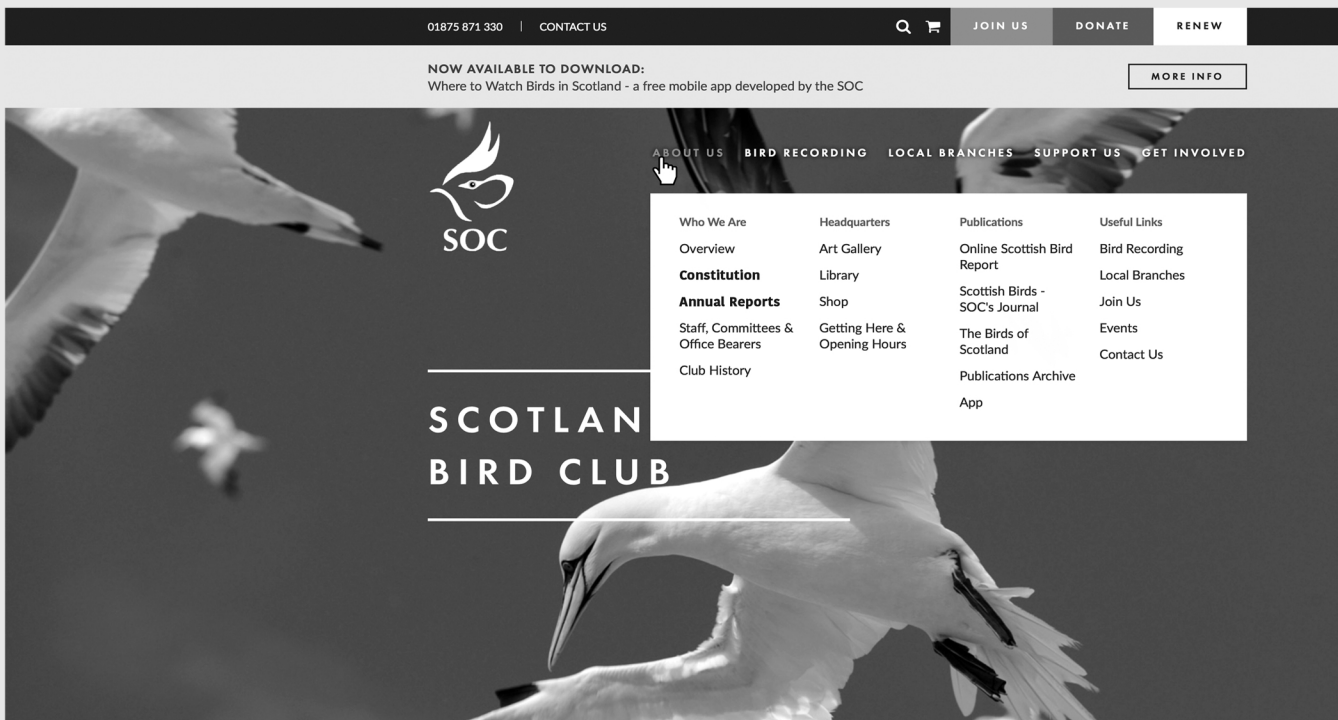
Item 2. See pp30-32 of the 2018/19 Annual Report

Items 4 & 5. Both the full accounts and the revised version of the Constitution are available from the SOC website under the 'About Us' tab or via the following urls:

www.the-soc.org.uk/about-us/annual-report

www.the-soc.org.uk/about-us/constitution

Alternatively, to obtain a printed copy of either of the above documents by post, please contact staff at Waterston House.



Item 5. Resolution to adopt the revised SOC Constitution

The current SOC Constitution was devised on behalf of the Club by the legal practice of Morton Fraser in 2015 when the Club became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). Following approval by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), it has in general served the Club well, with a limited revision approved at AGM 2018. However, in recent times, areas of the Constitution have been overtaken by new legislation (such as GDPR, the data protection regulations introduced in May 2018) while other areas have unnecessarily restricted the Club (for example, by setting explicit financial limits) and also placed constraints that would fail to allow natural and societal developments external to SOC to be reflected in the ways in which the SOC operates.

Whilst reviewing the Constitution in order to incorporate the changes approved at AGM 2018, which reflected changes in governance, it became clear that there were several other areas that could benefit from revision to remove ambiguity and to clarify the underlying intention. The aim has been to make this latest revision very much a “working document” that can be referred to for guidance by Council and Club members, to make it as clear as possible, and to ensure a degree of flexibility that enables Council to act in the best interests of the SOC.

The overall structure of the document remains unchanged. The “charitable objects” are essentially unaltered save for some minor editorial adjustments, and the powers of Council (the Trustees) and those of members at General Meetings such as the AGM remain the same.

Council held a lengthy discussion on the proposed revisions at its meeting in June 2019 and the version presented to members at the 2019 AGM is the one that Council has agreed to adopt and that it invites members to approve.

Item 6. Resolution to replace the system of Honorary Membership with the award of *SOC Fellowship*

Council at its meeting in December 2018 debated the issue of the most effective ways in which the Club could recognise notable contributions to the SOC's activities and objectives. It had become clear that the existing system of awarding Honorary Membership was hampered by the lack of clear criteria for the award and by the absence of an established framework for assessing nominations. Council approved a set of proposals put to it by the Strategic Planning Group (SPG) to replace the system of Honorary Members with the award of the title *SOC Fellow*.

Proposals

The SPG was clear that a system of recognition of contribution was extremely valuable and provides a means whereby the SOC could publicly acknowledge the work of those who advanced the Club's objectives.

The SPG proposed to Council that:-

- Current awards should run their natural course, but that no additional appointments should be made to the positions of Honorary President, Honorary Member or Honorary Librarian.
- No future appointments should be made on a non-Constitutional basis.
- The "Honorary" title should, in future be reserved for the Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer as office bearers in receipt of an *honorarium*.

The SPG further proposed that:-

- The Club create the award of "*SOC Fellow*" as a means of recognition of contributions to the SOC's objectives.
- That *SOC Fellows* should not be limited in number, but by the same token the award should be made with restraint and clearly supported by agreed, written criteria.
- That *SOC Fellows* should hold the title for life.
- That *SOC Fellowships* should be awarded according to outstanding contributions in one or more of three categories which broadly reflect the Constitutional Objects of the Club (Constitution section 3):
 - i. Outstanding contributions over an extended period to the scientific study of birds, including their conservation, recording and documentation.
 - ii. Outstanding contributions to the aesthetic and artistic appreciation of birds and wildlife.
 - iii. Outstanding contributions to service and citizenship in advancing and promoting the Club's interests, including training and education.
- That *SOC Fellowships* should not necessarily be restricted to Club members, but that they could be awarded to any individual making an outstanding contribution to Scottish ornithology in any of three above categories.

Item 7. Proposal to re-appoint Chris Wernham as Elected Member of Council

Chris is a long-standing supporter of the SOC and in her role as Head of BTO Scotland, she has formed close working ties with SOC staff and Club officials over the years. Chris has served on Council for the past three years and in this time her guidance and advice have been invaluable; she is a member of the Strategic Planning Group as well as the newly-formed Birding & Science Committee. Council proposes re-appointing Chris, who has kindly agreed to extend her tenure as an Elected Council member.

Item 8. Proposal to appoint David Lindgren as Honorary Secretary

David has a sound understanding of company law and corporate governance, having worked as a corporate lawyer for over 30 years before taking early retirement this year. He has also been involved at board level in a personal capacity with a number of charities and non-government organisations, including Scottish Athletics (Company Secretary) and the Scottish Wildlife Trust (Member of Council and the Finance and Audit Committee, and Convenor of the Nominations Committee).

David is based in Edinburgh but enjoys spending time in the Cairngorms where he has a little house. He has been a keen birdwatcher since he was a boy, encouraged by a Great Aunt who took him to Shetland to see the Snowy Owls on Fetlar. He has been a member of the YOC/RSPB since that time and latterly of course SWT. He regrets not having discovered the SOC until relatively recently, joining the Club in 2018. However, since then, he has taken an active interest in the Charity's activities, engaging with the Bird ID skills courses and attending last year's annual conference and AGM as well as joining a small working group of the Management Committee to assist with developing a Safeguarding policy and procedures for the Club.

David applied for the post in May, having spotted details of the vacancy in the March issue of *Scottish Birds*. Following an interview in early August, the Club's Appointing Panel made a formal recommendation to the President that David be put forward for the role, satisfied that his broad range of experience and good manner make him an excellent candidate.

If you are not booked in to attend the Annual Conference but plan to attend the AGM, we would be grateful if you could let us know. To register your apologies, please email secretary@the-soc.org.uk

For any other queries regarding this notice, please contact Wendy Hicks:
Tel. 01875 871330 Email: mail@the-soc.org.uk

Research & Surveys Committee

During the year under review, all R&S Committee's business was conducted by e-mail. In 2018, the SOC's research grants supported five independent/amateur studies of Scottish birds. The studies were all of a good quality and the Committee awarded a total of £2580. The projects supported this year were Orkney Oldsquaw (David Patterson, £680), Sanderling numbers and ecology, Sanday (Orkney Ringing Group, £500), Quandale skuas, Rousay, Orkney (David & Helen Aiton, £300), Geo-locators on Jack Snipe in the Clyde area (Clyde Ringing Group, £600), Central Scotland study of Breeding Honey Buzzards in Central Scotland (Honey Buzzard Study Group, £500). After many years as Chair, Tom Dougall decided to stand down at the end of March. We are deeply indebted to Tom for his hard work and dedication in guiding the work of the committee.

Colin Corse, Chair

Scottish Birds Records Committee

The Committee continued in its role assessing the records of rare birds in Scotland, and managing the Scottish List for the SOC. In November, SBRC welcomed new member, David Steel, representing Fife and replacing John Nadin, who retired having completed his tenure. SBRC would like to acknowledge and thank John for his hard work and contribution to SBRC work during his tenure, and we wish him a happy 'retirement'. Many members may already know incoming member David Steel from his position as Reserve Manager on the Isle of May National Nature Reserve, and David brings a wealth of experience from the birding east coast, and further afield.

During the year, SBRC processed 104 records, consisting of 31 different species. In total, 88 records were accepted, giving an overall acceptance rate of 85%, which is typical of recent years, while 16 records (15%) were found not proven. Nine batches of records were circulated, this being done electronically using Dropbox. This allows the circulation process to be completed quickly, and avoids postage costs and the potential loss of records when using surface mail. Accepted records were immediately posted on the SOC website by our hard-working Secretary, Chris McInerny, with all outcomes passed on to local recorders, who in turn informed observers.

SBRC continued with providing explanations behind the decision-making process for not proven records, when requested by the observer. Although receiving a 'not proven' adjudication is never pleasant, it is hoped that the work of SBRC will become more accountable and transparent with these explanations. A continuing venture for SBRC is the publication of annual summaries of SBRC-adjudicated species in *Scottish Birds*, in a format that follows the reports published by BBRC in *British Birds*. These publications highlight the work of the Committee and the SOC, and help to engage with the wider birding community by encouraging the submission of records to the Local Bird Recorders. The 2016 SBRC report was published in June (*Scottish Birds*, Vol 38, pp99-121), being co-authored on behalf of SBRC by Bob McGowan and Chris McInerny.

SBRC continued to appreciate a warm and constructive working relationship with local recorders and observers, without whom the Committee could not catalogue the incidence of rarer birds in Scotland. Council thanks all members of SBRC for their hard work during the year.

Mark Wilkinson, Chair

The Birds of Scotland Fund

Two applications were received by *The Birds of Scotland* (BS3) Fund this year. The first of these was a request for funding the publication of *Outer Hebrides Bird Report* for 2014-16 and 2017-18, with subsequent reports expected to be self-funding. This was the re-application for a grant (which had been previously approved, but returned unused) and the Committee was content to reinstate the award.

The second application was a funding request to support the development and implementation of the SOC's *Where to Watch Birds in Scotland* app for mobile devices using iOS and Android operating systems. The Stage 1 application was received and approved in July. The app was seen as an important way to engage with younger nature enthusiasts in particular, with this reflected in SOC Council's decision to underwrite costs, allowing the project to progress. The Stage 2 application was received in December. It was the largest funding application ever received by the BS3 Fund and, as such, further supporting detail was requested. The Stage 2 application was resubmitted in March, with 75% of the total cost of the project awarded, to the sum of £19,110.

Over the last year, Mike Martin and Paul Taylor stood down from the Committee after completion of their terms on Council and they are thanked for their contributions. Two new members were appointed: Will Cresswell and Jeremy Wilson. In March, David Jardine stood down after serving as Chairman since its inception. The Committee records its appreciation to David for his proficient administration of the Fund during his tenure. It was agreed by the Committee that it would operate in future with four members, with Bob McGowan and Chris McInerny acting as Co-Chairs.

Details of the BS3 Fund, the type of projects it supports, and how to apply for funding, can be found on the SOC website at www.the-soc.org.uk/about-us/publications/the-birds-of-scotland-fund

Bob McGowan & Chris McInerny, Co-Chairs

Scottish Raptor Monitoring Group

The SOC is one of several partners of the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Group (SRMG), which is chaired by Scottish Natural Heritage. The other partners are the British Trust for Ornithology, Forestry Commission Scotland, the Rare Birds Breeding Panel, the Scottish Raptor Study Groups, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Forest Enterprises Scotland.

The Raptor Monitoring Co-Ordinator, Amy Challis, is on maternity leave and the post is being covered by Nina Schonberg on a twelve-month contract. Work is in progress on two major priorities: Setting up an online recording system, and producing trend reports on five priority species – Peregrine, Kestrel, Merlin, Hen Harrier and Raven.

In addition, work is ongoing to address volunteer training needs, enhance raptor monitoring coverage in Scotland, promote good practice in data sharing, and report and establish indicators and alerts for the Scottish raptor populations. The scale of the submission of records in 2018 was impressive; a total of 8,132 raptor species nesting records were received, 94% of them provided by the Raptor Study Groups – 5,138 for diurnal raptors, 1,688 for owls and 829 for Raven.

During the year, the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme published one issue of the e-newsletter, *Scottish Raptor*, which can be accessed via the SRMG website. www.raptormonitoring.org

Gordon Riddle, SOC representative, SRMG

Bird Recording in Scotland

Bird recording in Scotland relies on a network of recorders who play a vital role in collating data, which are used for compiling the regional bird reports, feeding in to BirdTrack, and informing development and planning applications affecting bird habitat. During the year, we saw Russ Neave and Emma Neave-Webb formally take up the reins of Local Bird Recorder for Orkney, following on from Jim Williams, who had retired in January 2018. Council thanks Jim for all his hard work in post from 2000-18, and his involvement in the annual *Orkney Bird Report* from 1997. Nick Littlewood, recorder for North-east Scotland (2013-18) stepped down and was replaced by Ian Broadbent. Up-to-date contact details for the 20 Scottish LBRs are included on the inside back cover of issues of *Scottish Birds*.

In July, the Club held a Local Bird Recorders' Conference at Stirling University. The need for such a meeting had been flagged up by the late Ray Murray, given that the previous recorders meeting had taken place in 2009. The event was coordinated and chaired by Stuart Rivers and was attended by 19 recorders plus representatives of SOC, BTO, BirdTrack, SBRC, the Online Scottish Bird Report and Rare Bird Breeding Panel. A wide range of topics was discussed, and a number of action points noted, with revision/updating of the SOC's 'Guidance to Local Bird Recorders' identified as a priority. This along with other ideas for supporting the LBR network will be carried forward by the new Birding & Science Committee.

Stuart also continued to represent the SOC on the BirdTrack Steering Group. Two meetings were held during the year with the main development being the unification of the 'domestic' and 'global' home page 'portals' to be a single page. Again improvements to the site-selection and record verification options had been made, plus greater choice for re-examination and analysis of lists and data. Help videos are also now available on the (BTO) website for use of BirdTrack. Data input is now simplified with adoption of a single 'base list' which generally follows IOC taxonomic order and names.

Stuart Rivers, SOC Birding Officer

Conferences

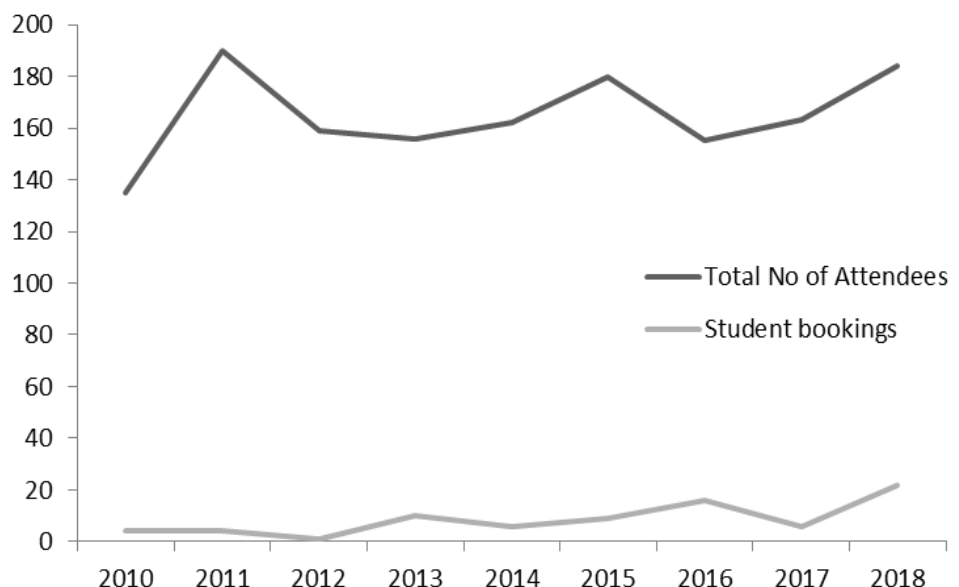
SOC Annual Conference and AGM, 26-28 October 2018, Macdonald Aviemore Resort

Birds in the Human Landscape was the theme for this year's conference, with talks spanning two approaches to conservation: Creating reserves in wild places, leaving people out (*land sparing*) and conserving wildlife within increasingly human-dominated environments (*land sharing*). Guest speakers were Pete Cairns (Conservation Photographer), Mike Toms (BTO), Andrew Stevenson (SNH), Derek Coleman (Beddington Farm Bird Group), Dr Ron Summers (RSPB Scotland), Andrew Thorpe (North Sea Bird Club) and Dr Nigel Collar (BirdLife International). The PhD slots were delivered by Eilidh McNab (University of Stirling) and Ross McLeod (Glasgow University) in conjunction with Kat Jones (RSPB Scotland).

The number attending the event was 184, including staff, volunteers and speakers. The uptake of the Club's continuing student/young person's special discount rate, first introduced in 2010, reached the highest yet (22 bookings). The proportion of non-member delegates was around 12%, comprising mostly students and speakers. Of these, five subsequently joined the Club.

While the icy weather conditions over the weekend made the to-ing and fro-ing between the accommodation and the conference centre rather precarious, the programme itself was well received and all ran smoothly, thanks largely to volunteer AV technician and young birder, Michael Sinclair, along with dad, Kevin. For a full conference report, see *Scottish Birds*, Vol 38, p318-326.

Figure 1. SOC Annual Conference attendance (includes speakers, staff and volunteers)



Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference, 16 March 2019, Corran Halls, Oban

BTO Scotland and Argyll Bird Club were the lead organisers for this year's spring gathering, which attracted almost 230 birdwatchers from around the country, many making a weekend of it and joining conference staff and delegates for an evening meal and enjoying one of the organised outings on the Sunday. Thirteen young ornithologists took up the discounted student rate. To reflect the location of the event, a coastal theme was chosen ('Wings over Western Skies'), with ornithological highlights expertly delivered by Amanda Trask (University of Aberdeen), Lila Buckingham (Centre for Ecology & Hydrology), Bridget England (RSPB Scotland), Alan Fielding (Independent Conservation Data Analyst), John Calladine (BTO Scotland), Robin Ward (Treshnish Isles Auk Ringing Group), Ross Lilley (SNH) and John Aitchison (Wildlife Cameraman).

For a full conference report, see *Scottish Birds*, Vol 39, pp142-149.

Flying the SOC flag at other events

In addition to branches promoting the Club at regional events (see Branch Activities pp9-11), HQ organised an SOC presence at a number of other national and international birding meetings: The 5th Pan-European Duck Symposium, 16-20 April, Isle of Great Cumbrae (SOC sponsorship), BTO Scotland's Integrated Bird Recording meeting, 22 September, Stirling (SOC representation, exploring collaborative approaches to up-skilling birdwatchers), Mary Colwell's Scottish Lowland/Farmland Curlew Workshop, 27 September, Battleby (130 sample issues of *Scottish Birds* and membership promo packs given out), The 44th Scottish Ringers' Conference, 16-18 November, Carrbridge (exhibitor stand), and the BTO Annual Conference, 7-9 December, Swanwick (exhibitor stand). We are grateful to members attending these events for volunteering to help, particularly with transporting promotional materials, and setting up and manning stands.

Publications

Scottish Birds

Four issues of *Scottish Birds* were published during the year on schedule, with the editors succeeding in pulling together an excellent mix of research papers, short notes and general articles. The photography accompanying the rarities accounts continued to provide a feast for the eye, as did the PhotoSpot on the back cover, where an image from the SOC website photo gallery is selected and put under the spotlight. Indeed, Jim Smith's impressive Raven shot, selected for the June issue, made it into the national press. Regular round-up features included ringing and bird observatory activities, and rarity sightings. Coverage of the Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference and the SOC Annual Conference & AGM occupied their usual spots in the June and December issues respectively.

No editorial meetings were held in the reporting year, with any pressing issues dealt with by email. The back catalogue of the journal is available on the SOC website as well as via the Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL): www.biodiversitylibrary.org

The Hoot

Three issues of the Club's e-digest were published during the reporting year (April, August and January). Readers were given an insight into some remarkable bird facts. For example, the Honey Buzzard's extraordinary adaptations to its peculiar diet and the Bearded Tit's ability to change its gut morphology on a seasonal basis. Other contributions examined questions that have puzzled ornithologists for years, such as the shape of a bird's egg (Prof Tim Birkhead). Thanks to Chris McInerney, readers were provided with a digestible insight into some of the latest scientific papers, including how scientists judge the effect of windfarms on seabirds. *The Hoot* continues to be warmly received by readers and editor Jane Allison thanks members for their helpful feedback.

Local bird atlases

In February, the long-awaited atlas of birds in Lothian and Borders was published by the SOC. The 542-page hardback, *Birds in South-east Scotland 2007-13*, edited and compiled by three former

SOC Presidents – Ray Murray, Ian Andrews and Mark Holling – with assistance from six other local SOC members, is the culmination of six years atlas fieldwork and much research and analysis. It is a fitting tribute to the work and enthusiasm of Ray Murray, who died in 2016. Publication of this book was supported by a loan from *The Birds of Scotland* Fund.

Online Scottish Bird Report (OSBR)

Hosted on the SOC website, the OSBR contains searchable data from around 700 local bird report issues. The current policy is that data is uploaded to the site after a period of three years following the publication of a local bird report. A digital archive of earlier printed issues of *Scottish Bird Report* is available via BHL (see *Scottish Birds* above).

Regional bird reports

In the 2018/19 period, the following reports were published: Angus & Dundee 2013/14, Argyll 2017, Arran 2018, Ayrshire 2015/16, Borders 2017, Dumfries & Galloway 2017, Fair Isle 2017, Fife 2015 (digital), Highland 2016 & 2017, Isle of May 2017, Lothian 2014, 2015 & 2016, North-East Scotland 2016, Outer Hebrides 2014-16, and Shetland 2016.

Birdline Scotland

Birdline Scotland provides comprehensive and up-to-the-minute information on bird sightings in Scotland. It is run by Angus Murray in collaboration with the SOC and takes the form of regularly recorded updates accessed via a premium telephone number 09068 700234 (calls are charged at 60p per minute). The success of Birdline Scotland relies on birdwatchers reporting their sightings and details of how observers can do this can be found on the SOC website under the Bird Recording tab. Visitors to this area of the website will also find the popular Spring Migrant Arrival tables, kindly compiled by Angus exclusively for the SOC.

Staff

Jane Allison (née Cleaver), full-time Development Officer, focuses on growing Club membership, supporting the branch network and raising the SOC's public profile, not least through securing a presence at key bird events, forging partnerships and seeking opportunities with like-minded organisations and target audiences, and steering new Club projects such as the *Where to Birdwatch in Scotland* app. Jane also keeps the SOC website and social media pages up to date, assists branches with the promotion of local talks and outings, and produces *The Hoot*. On a personal note, Jane married fellow birdwatcher and SOC member James Allison in August and, at the time of writing, the couple are expecting their first child (due 30 November 2019).

Kathryn Cox, part-time Membership Officer, manages the Club's membership database as well as coordinating the programme of winter talks and liaising with branches to compile the programme of year-round outings. Following the new data protection legislation ('GDPR') that came into force in May, Kathryn played a key role in the effective management of members' mailing list consents.

Laura Gressani, part-time Art Exhibitions Coordinator, replaced Dave Allan, who retired from the post in April. As well as seeing through the hanging of the exhibitions already arranged up to December by Dave, Laura organised the rest of the year's programme of art exhibitions, talks and workshops as well as managing all the advertising and promotion for the art events and sourcing new art and craft-related items for HQ's shop.

Wendy Hicks, full-time Club Administrator, oversees the day-to-day running of Waterston House as well as providing support to the office bearers and Development Officer and dealing with wider SOC business including conference organisation, fielding funding applications and content submissions to *Scottish Birds*, coordinating the quarterly mailings, compiling the Annual Report and attending Council and Management Committee meetings.

Susan Horne, part-time Librarian, continued to streamline procedures in the library, including the organization of a clear and user-friendly system for processing book donations. She worked closely

with a small but dedicated team of volunteers to ensure that book and journal accessions were kept up to date and organized the book reviews for *Scottish Birds*. During the year, Susan made a successful application to the National Library of Scotland for the Club's audio material to be part of the British Library's national sound archives digitization programme.

Mairead Lyons, part-time Finance Officer, swiftly got to grips with the Club's day-to-day bookkeeping after taking up post in November 2017. She set about researching alternative bookkeeping systems that would offer better reporting and more flexibility and by the end of the reporting period, she had upgraded software in place ready for the start of the new financial year. As part of her finance remit, Mairead worked closely with the Treasurer to manage the Club's short- and long-term finances.

Scott Paterson, Bird ID Skills Trainer, was brought on board from August to organise and lead HQ's bird identification guided walks, taking over from Dave Allan. During the reporting period, Scott organised a regular and varied programme of courses and individual walks. From the outset, the feedback from participants has been consistently excellent. Scott currently provides his services to the SOC on a consultancy basis.

Stuart Rivers, part-time Birding Officer, officially took up post in April, replacing Dave Allan as HQ's resident bird expert, ably staffing the centre at weekends and assisting colleagues with all bird-related enquiries. In his capacity as Birding Officer, Stuart is also Secretary of the newly-formed Birding & Science Committee.

Volunteers

The running of the Club relies heavily on volunteer support – from the trustees themselves to the various Council committees and work groups, *Scottish Birds* editors, local branch representatives, and members who help out at SOC conferences (including the write-up for *Scottish Birds*) or who facilitate a presence at other birding and wildlife events. Waterston House is very fortunate to have a dedicated core of volunteers who provide invaluable support to staff on a regular basis (see p13).

On a country-wide scale, volunteers provide the main input to the SOC's branch activities and local bird recording effort. Much of the latter is of significant national importance to conservation bodies and government. Some contributors have carried out regular surveys on the same sites for many years, providing invaluable long-term datasets. Council wishes to acknowledge the tremendous work that goes into such fieldwork and congratulates all those volunteers who give their time to compile and contribute to local bird reports and atlases and, this year in particular, to the SOC's mobile app.

Council wishes to thank everybody who supports the SOC through their voluntary efforts, without which the Club could not function.

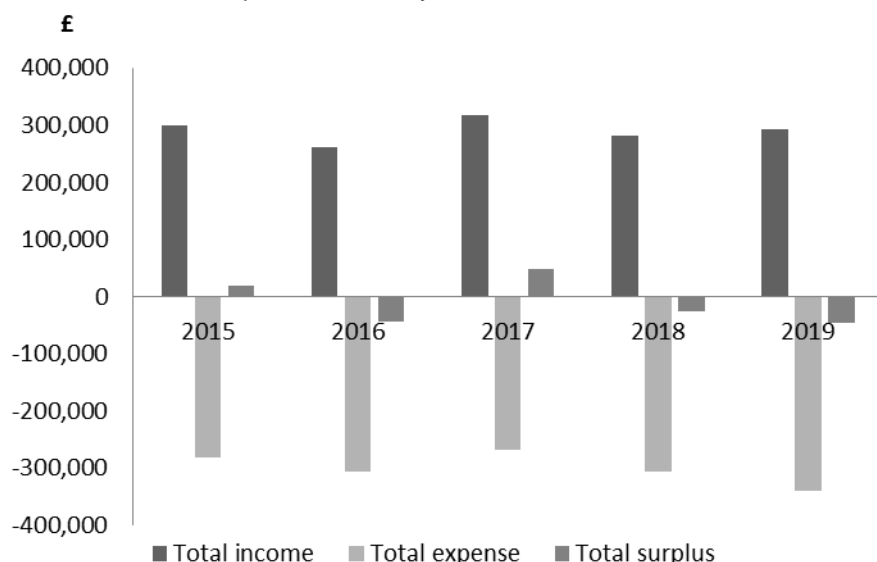
Finance

The details presented here are a summary only; the full accounts are available on the SOC website (under the 'About Us' tab). Alternatively, a hard copy can be requested from Waterston House.

Accounts Summary

In the year to 31 March 2019, the SOC recorded a deficit of £45,643 (2018: deficit of £25,903) on a total income of £279,965 (2018: £295,530), (Figure 1). Our total assets, including branch funds, fell from £1,572,324 (2018) to £1,526,682.

Figure 1. Income and expense summary



Valuation of fixed assets

These are difficult to value and so usefully separated. Waterston house depreciation was calculated at £8,723 for 2018-19 (2017/18: £8,723). SOC made new investments (£41,144) and disposed of investments (£46,335). Gains on revaluation of these investments during the year were £13,229 (2018: losses £13,683). At the end of the year the value of SOC investments was up slightly at £384,695 (2018: £376,657).

The Birds of Scotland (BS3) Fund

As a result of the considerable grant awarded to largely fund the SOC mobile app, the total amount drawn down from the BS3 Fund was £28,080 for the year. This was a major project for the Club and the first app of its kind in Britain, and the Club is indebted to the BS3 Fund Committee for the donation of £19,110. A loan of £4,000 was also made to fund production costs of the South-east Scotland bird atlas. At the year end, the assets of the Fund stood at £48,944.

Branch Accounts

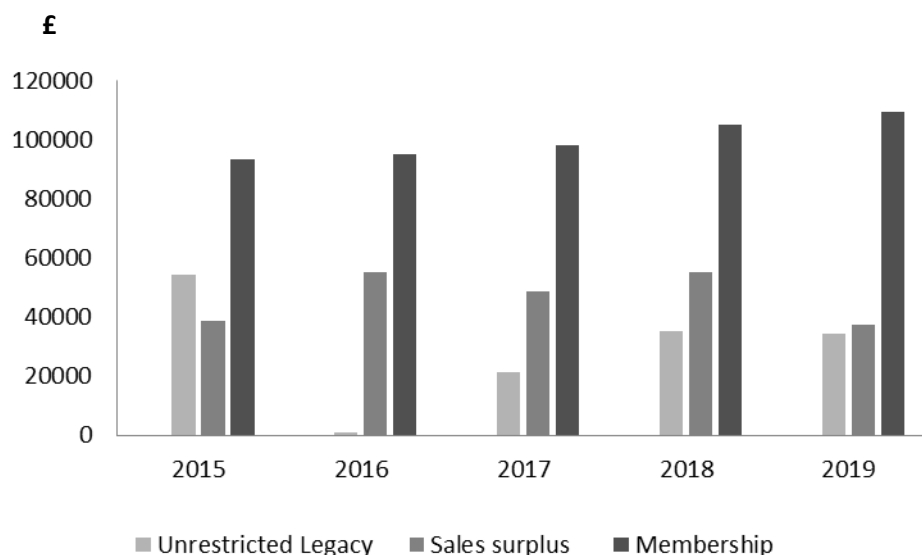
The financial year 2015-2016 was the first year that SOC accounts included full details of branch accounts, previously considered not to be material compared to general Club accounts. In the 12 months to March 2019, funds held by branches stood at £60,541 (2018: £65,270), a deficit of £3,812 on turnover of £10,403.

General Club activities

Highlights of the financial year 2018-19 were (Figure 2):

- Despite an increase in membership fees in 2017, income from subscriptions this year reached its highest ever level at £108,839 (2018: £105,154).
- Profits from sales fell to £37,509 (2018: £54,976).
- Commission on art sales continues to make a valuable contribution to Club income (£13,655) although this year's commission is down on the previous year (£33,438). Art workshops were, however, well-attended and successful.
- Legacies continued to make a valuable contribution to Club income this year (£34,292) and were on a level with the previous year (£35,000). Our thanks go to the estates concerned.
- A sum of £2,186 was paid from the General Account (in addition to funds from the BS3 Fund) as a contribution to the cost of the design and publication of the Club's mobile app.
- As reported previously, in 2017/18, new salary scales were implemented, staff roles re-defined and payments made for overdue back-pay. In the reporting year, the cost of wages and salaries rose only slightly to £99,648 (2018: £99,362).

Figure 2. Income highlights



In summary, the accounts registered a deficit of £45,644, almost double that of the previous year, which largely reflects the Club's continued commitment to developing several aspects of its core activities. For example, in 2017/18, we updated and improved our website, and in the reporting period, we invested in organizing a Local Bird Recorders' Conference and used central funds in addition to BS3 Fund monies to finance the innovative *Where to Watch Birds in Scotland* app. All of this was possible because we currently have sound financial reserves (in cash and investments), supplemented by sound membership income, legacies, art sales commission and returns on our banking investments. In the years ahead, the process of developing key elements of our activities will continue and the associated finance will need to be made available.

Legacies

Council wishes to record with special thanks, generous legacies received from the estates of Mr J W Carruthers, Miss D M Hill, Mr T Poyser and Mr N H Trewin.

Report of the Trustees of the Property Endowment Fund of the SOC

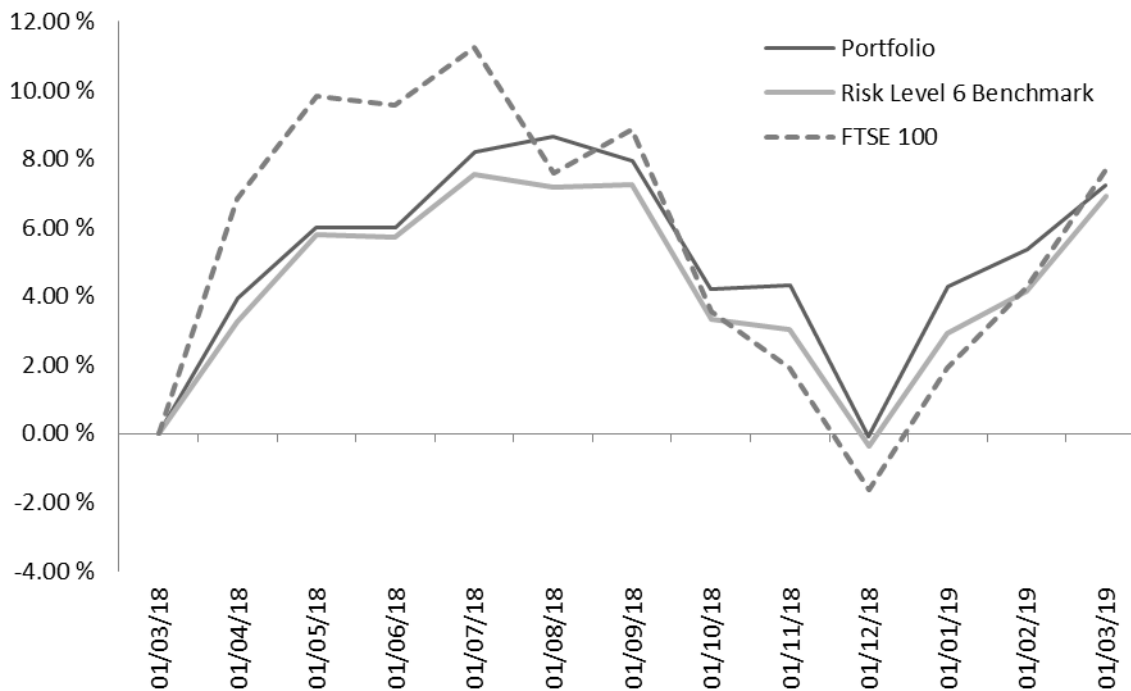
At 31 March 2015, the Property Endowment Fund was wound up and its assets transferred to the new SOC SCIO. The PEF trustees considered that the transfer would continue to meet the requirement to fund the provision and maintenance of a Scottish Centre for Ornithology, and that The Property Endowment Fund will continue to be reported in SOC accounts as a Restricted Fund. The Fund assets at 31 March 2019 were £334,727 (2018: £336,280), with expenditure during the year of £1,553 (2018: £216) on maintenance of Waterston House.

Investment and Financial Reserves policy

During the past year, the Finance Committee has been reviewing the Club's Investments, Reserves and Ethical Investment policies. These will all be combined in one policy. Drafts have been prepared by the Treasurer, reviewed by the Committee and then commented on by Brewin Dolphin, our investment managers. A version of the Policy will be presented to Council for its approval during 2019. The level of Reserves set will allow the SOC to maintain its regular charitable activities despite potential inter-annual variability in income.

The Treasurer meets at least annually with Brewin Dolphin and confirms the level of investment risk that the Club wishes to set for its investments. During the year there were sales of £46,335 and £41,144 of purchases were made. Capital appreciation of £13,229 was recorded and dividend income of £13,537 was received in the year. This represents a total return after fees of 6.5%. This compares to a return on the linked benchmark (Risk Category 6 – Balanced Benchmark) of 6.92% and the FTSE 100 Index, Total Return of 7.69% (Figure 3).

Figure 3. SOC Performance v Benchmark & FTSE 100 (TR)



Risk Management

Council maintains a comprehensive Register (initiated in 2015 – 2016) of the various risks that the Club needs to manage. In 2018 – 2019, the Strategic Planning Group undertook a review of the Register and Council was pleased to note that overall risk management had improved significantly with changes to the Club’s governance, and that there was an enhanced awareness of the legislative requirements of the Charity and the organisation generally. Council will review the Register on a regular basis and is considering the most effective means to do this.

Taxation

The SOC is a charity and is recognized as such by HM Revenue and Customs for taxation purposes. As a result, there is no liability to taxation on any of its income.

Council’s responsibilities

Charity law requires the Council to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Charity and of the surplus or deficit of the Charity for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the Council members are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the accounts
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Charity will continue in business.

Council is responsible for keeping proper accounting records, which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charity and ensures that the financial statements comply with the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. It is also responsible for safeguarding the Charity’s assets and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

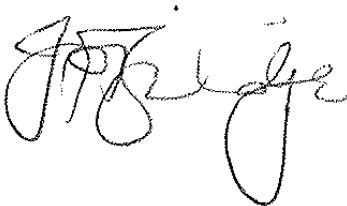
Independent Financial Examination

AW Scotland C.A. was appointed as Independent Examiner to the Charity and he carried out the independent examination required under the Charities and Trustees Investment (Scotland) Act 2005. As stated in the full version of the accounts, nothing was found to be unsatisfactory.

Council would like to thank Waterston House staff and the various committee officials and Club representatives for their assistance with compiling this Annual Report.

Approved by Council on 16 August 2019

and signed on its behalf by **Ian Bainbridge** (President)



STAFF

Club Administrator: Wendy Hicks
Development Officer: Jane Allison
Finance Officer: Mairead Lyons
Membership Officer: Kathryn Cox

Art Exhibitions Coordinator: Laura Gressani
Birding Officer: Stuart Rivers
Librarian: Susan Horne
Bird ID Skills Trainer: Scott Paterson

CLUB COMMITTEES

Management committee

Ian Bainbridge (President) (ex officio), Lesley Creamer (Chair and Vice-President *Management & Infrastructure*), David Heeley (Hon. Secretary) (ex officio), Andrew Thorpe (Hon. Treasurer) (ex officio), Alan Knox (SOC Library Chair) (ex officio), Caroline Gordon, Fiona McLean

Finance Committee

Andrew Thorpe (Hon Treasurer & Chair), Doreen Main (to November), Alex Banwell (from November), Melvin Morrison

Scottish Birds Editorial Committee

Ian Andrews (Coordinating Editor and Chair), Stan da Prato (Editor: Peer-reviewed papers) assisted by Ian Bainbridge, Mick Marquiss, Clive McKay, Will Miles and Bob Swann; Jimmy Maxwell, Harry Scott and Stuart Rivers (Editors: Articles)

Library Committee

Alan Knox (Chair), Bob McGowan, David Clugston, Lesley Creamer, Ian Elfick (Archivist), Norman Elkins, John Law, John Savory

Research and Surveys Committee

Tom Dougall (Chair), Michael Bell, Colin Corse, Raymond Duncan, Les Hatton

Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC)

Mark Wilkinson (Chair), Chris McInerny (Secretary), Jim Dickson, David Parnaby, David Pullan, Martin Scott, David Steel, Mark Warren, Bob McGowan (Museum Consultant)

SBRC Scottish List subcommittee

David Clugston, Ron Forrester, Angus Hogg, Bob McGowan, Chris McInerny, Roger Riddington

The Birds of Scotland Fund Committee

Chris McInerny (Co-Chair), Bob McGowan (Co-Chair), Will Cresswell, Jeremy Wilson

BRANCH COMMITTEES

Ayrshire Chair – Pat Gibbs, Vice-Chair – Brian Lennox, Secretary – Anne Dick, Treasurer – Ian Clark, Members – Brian Dodson, John Drummond, Roger Hissett, Norman Lawrie, David Rackham, Tony Scott, Jim Thomson

Borders Chair – David Parkinson, Secretary – Neil Stratton, Treasurer – Martin Moncrieff, Member – Malcolm Ross

Caithness Chair – Donald Omand, Vice-Chair – Graham Crittenden & Karen Munro, Secretary – Angus McBay, Treasurer – Eric Maughan

Central Scotland Chair – Roger Gooch (to Nov 18) then Rick Goater, Vice-Chair – John Crook (to Nov 18), Treasurer/Secretary – Neil Bielby, Members – Rick Goater (to Nov 18), Roger Gooch (from Nov 18), Eilidh McNab, Roger Stewart (from Nov 18), Ken Wilkinson

Clyde Chair – Zul Bhatia, Vice-Chair – Bernie Zonfrillo, Secretary – Ian Fulton, Treasurer – Liz Parsons, Members – Iain Gibson, Fiona McLean, Sandy McNeil, David Palmar, Toby Wilson

Dumfries Chair – John Riddet, Secretary – Lesley Creamer, Treasurer – Alex Banwell, Members – Monica Callander, Drew Davidson, Christine Dudgeon, Edmund Fellowes, Robin Thomson

Fife Chair – Elizabeth Irwin, Secretary – Caroline Gordon, Treasurer – John Irwin, Members – Elizabeth Adams, Rob Armstrong, Norman Elkins, Andy Falconer (from Sep 18), Rodger Neilson, Andrew Riches, Paul Taylor (to Sep 18)

Highland Chair – David Bain, Secretary – Kathy Boniface, Treasurer – Lynda Graham, Members – Jonathan Clarke, Peter Gordon, Alex Joss, Al McNee, Carol Miller, Susan Seright, Peter Stronach

Lothian Chair – Richard Leslie, Secretary – Morag King, Treasurer – Stephen Hunter, Members – Alison Creamer, Gillian Herbert, Hilary Maxfield, Ptolemy McKinnon (to Feb 19), Cherle Smith, Mike Thornton

Moray Chair – David Law, Secretary – Alison Ritchie, Treasurer – Melvin Morrison, Members – Martin Cook, Frank Ritchie, Richard Somers Cocks, Alastair Young

North-East Scotland Chair – Alan Knox, Secretary – John Wills, Treasurer – Paddy Grant, Members – Hugh Addlesee, Nick Littlewood

Orkney Chair – Peter Slater (to Oct 18) then Colin Corse, Secretary/Vice-Chair – Helen Aiton, Treasurer – Peter Slater (to Oct 18) then Helen Aiton

Stewartry Chair – Jeremy Brock, Vice-chair/Joint Treasurer – Peter Swan, Secretary/Joint Treasurer – Joan Howie, Members – Ian Bainbridge, Andrew Bielinski, Mark Pollitt, Graham Smith

Tayside Chair – John Campbell, Secretary/Treasurer – Brian Brocklehurst, Members – Ron Downing, Jon Cook

West Galloway Chair – David McGhie, Vice-Chair – Alan Johnstone, Secretary/Treasurer – Geoff Sheppard, Members – Sandra Alder, Jean Sheppard

		<p>The commission from sales of artwork had risen by 50%, and income from legacies stood at £35k for the year. He pointed out that it was important for members to realise that these three sources accounted for nearly one half of all income. Expenditure on staff matters had increased due to role re-evaluations and upgrading of pay. The rebuilding of the Club website had proved extremely successful, and there had been professional fees to be settled for this work of some £15k. Revaluation of some of the Club’s investments had been influenced by the volatility of the market valuation. Overall the accounts showed a deficit of £26k for the year compared with a £50k surplus for 2016-2017. This figure was heavily influenced by the investment revaluation. AT concluded that the Club was in sound financial position, holding good balances in its accounts and in liquid investments.</p> <p>On the matter of the ethical status of the investment portfolio, AT drew the AGM’s attention to the annual discussion of this issue that he has with the investment managers, Brewin Dolphin. In general they operated an overarching ethical policy for their clients who were charities, but that it was not feasible to obtain very fine-grained detail.</p> <p>Adoption of the Accounts: Proposed - Chris Wernham Seconded - Alastair Whitelaw Approved without dissent</p>
6	Amendments to the Constitution	<p>The Chair presented a paper that had been circulated to members, outlining amendments to the Constitution that would enable a restructuring of the governance of the Club. The proposals had arisen from an extensive series of discussions forming part of a broader strategic review of SOC that was being conducted by Council. Specifically, the amendments would allow the appointment of two Vice-presidents with responsibility for Management and Infrastructure, and Birding and Science respectively, a change in the role of the President, and written remits for all three. The Chair noted that this was considerable step forward for the Club and welcomed the proposals which had the approval and unqualified support of Council.</p> <p>In response to a comment from the floor, the Secretary (David Heeley) offered apologies for the clumsy titling of the paper as “Temporary Amendments”, indicating that the “Temporary” part of the title should be struck out. He noted that the changes were intended to be permanent until such time as new proposals that would alter the amendment came forward to an AGM. A complete revision of the Constitution was in progress and would be presented to the 2019 AGM. There were no further comments.</p> <p>The Amendments to the Constitution were approved without dissent</p>
7	Election of Council Member	<p>The Chair noted that the term of office of Bob McGowan as an Elected Member of Council was coming to an end. He noted Bob McGowan’s contributions to the <i>Birds of Scotland</i> fund Committee, latterly his role in the Appointing Panel of Council for the President and office-bearers, and his broader contributions to Council generally. Bob McGowan had indicated that he was willing to stand for re-election. There were no further nominations.</p> <p>Election of Bob McGowan as Elected Member: Nominated - David Jardine Seconded - Peter Gordon Elected unopposed</p>
8	Election of Office-bearers	<p>The Chair explained to the AGM that the three nominations for the reformed structure for President supported by two Vice-presidents were the result of the deliberations of an Appointing Panel of Council and were coming to the AGM with Council’s full support.</p> <p>Election of Ian Bainbridge as President: Nominated - Bob McGowan Seconded - Paul Taylor Elected unopposed</p>

		<p>Election of Jeremy Wilson as Vice President <i>Birding & Science</i>: Nominated - Chris Wernham Seconded - David Rackham Elected unopposed</p> <p>Election of Lesley Creamer as Vice President <i>Management & Infrastructure</i>: Nominated - David Heeley Seconded - Andrew Thorpe Elected unopposed</p> <p>The incoming President, Ian Bainbridge (IB), in a brief address to the AGM indicated that he was both pleased and honoured to have been invited to take on this new role. He noted that the situation was somewhat unusual in that his predecessors had all served terms on Council as Vice-president and that therefore there was much that he had to learn. Nonetheless, he was extremely supportive of the aims of the SOC, and his analysis was that the Club was a well-managed and well-run organisation with a bright future that he looked forward to helping develop. The AGM welcomed the address with acclamation. IB then passed back to James Main to close the meeting and to continue to host the remainder of the Conference.</p>
9	Election of Hon Secretary and Hon Treasurer	<p>The Chair, James Main, informed the meeting that David Heeley had indicated that he was willing to continue serving as Secretary until AGM 2019, and that Andy Thorpe had indicated that he was willing to continue serving as Treasurer. There were no other nominations.</p> <p>The continuing appointments were approved without dissent.</p>
10	Appointment of the Independent Financial Examiner	<p>The Chair noted that it was formally necessary for the Club to approve the appointment of an Independent Financial Examiner on an annual basis. The present Examiner, Sandy Scotland, had indicated that he was willing to continue in this role, and the Chair, noting his effectiveness, recommended that he be re-appointed.</p> <p>Approval that Sandy Scotland continue as the Independent Financial Examiner: Proposed - Jeremy Wilson Seconded - Andrew Thorpe Approved without dissent</p>
11	AOCB	<p>The Chair, James Main (JM), made a brief personal address to the AGM, offering his thanks to all for the support and encouragement that he had received during his term of office as President, into which he had been precipitated earlier than expected due to his predecessor having to stand down for personal reasons. He was particularly appreciative of the efforts of all at Waterson House HQ, and also his fellow office-bearers. He concluded by complimenting the work of the Strategy Group of Council whose efforts he considered would result in a significant improvement in the ability of the Club to meet its charitable objectives and to serve its members. The AGM applauded JM's period of office.</p> <p>There was no other competent business</p>
10	Date and place of next meeting	<p>The Chair announced that the next Annual General Meeting of the Club would be held on the Saturday evening of the next Annual Conference in 2019. The venue and date had yet to be confirmed.</p> <p>The meeting closed at approximately 1745hrs.</p>