



Sorry folks, but I'm afraid I missed the deadline for the July mailing, so you'll have to make do with this news-sheet instead of the usual Bird Bulletin. Normal service should be restored for the next mailing. Fortunately I still have space to include a report from our branch chairman (or should that be chairwoman?) Jacky Robinson, plus a summary of the branch accounts.

Hope to see you all at the first branch meeting of the 2007/08 season, which will be held at Meadowbank Stadium on Tuesday 11 Sep, 7.30pm. Our next couple of outings are on 26 Aug (Musselburgh and Gosford Bay), and 23 Sep (Pencaitland/Saltoun area). Please contact Gillian Herbert on 0131 337 0767 if you'd like to come along. Finally, the new Lothian Bird Report should hopefully be at the printers by the time you read this, and on sale shortly afterwards. It will include a free DVD following the fortunes of one of Lothian's first breeding pairs of Nuthatch.

stephenjameshunter@btopenworld.com, tel 0131 556 4996

SOC Lothian Branch - Chairman's Report 2006/07

During the last year there has been a pleasing increase in the number of members attending monthly indoor meetings with up to 50 on some occasions – both new and long-standing members. I am sure a number of factors is responsible for this – a continuation of the 'Waterston House effect' with more new members in the region, the interesting topics of the meetings and some excellent speakers, as well as the use of the Lothian Birders group email to publicise and remind us of forthcoming meetings. The buzz before the meetings and during the interval is really great to hear, and it's very good to see new members being drawn into the group and made to feel so welcome.

We have held the usual 8 meetings during the year, 4 being organised by SOC HQ, the remainder by the branch. This year, for the first time, we held 2 meetings at Waterston House, Aberlady, rather than at our usual venue, Meadowbank Stadium, Edinburgh. This was in acknowledgement of the very large numbers of new SOC members from East Lothian and to encourage them to come along to an indoor meeting. This has met with mixed success; smaller numbers overall but some new faces. The October meeting with local member, Stan de Prato, as speaker, was well attended, but with fewer people from Edinburgh. In March, not surprisingly, many Edinburgh-based members opted to attend the joint SOC/RSPB Edinburgh Members'/SWT meeting hosted by the RSPB Edinburgh group for the talk on Changes to Scotland's Birdlife: A New Avifauna, or BS3, rather than travel to Aberlady to hear the same subject. We've had a most interesting and informative 'Look at Migration' from Mike Carrier, and some fabulous photographs of the countryside and birds including sea eagles, as part of Bob McMillan's presentation on Skye Birds.

The committee plans the remainder of the year's programme, and we've had excellent contributions this year at both our members' meetings in September and last April (with amazing photography from Graham Checkley, and an insight into the work of the

Edinburgh Ranger Service with Fergus Cook), as well as from Natalie Taylor, Ranger with Historic Scotland on Holyrood Park and its Conservation, and Chris Waltho, president-elect of SOC, on his long-term specialist subject of Eiders in the Clyde, in December and January respectively. If any members would like talks on specific topics in the future, or indeed, know of good speakers, please let one of the committee know.

There have been about 10 Sunday outings in the year. I say 'about' as one planned to sail round the Bass Rock never got off the ground, and another to Muirshiel C Park had to be cancelled at short notice because the hen harriers deserted their nest site just days before the visit. I won't go into details of them all (they have been reported in the Lothian Bird Bulletin) but for me the highlights were a very successful outing to The Hirsel with Keith Macgregor (with lots of warblers to be seen; being able to listen to the difference between the song of blackcap and garden warbler, seeing and hearing several nuthatch, and for some, the sighting of an otter); and incredible views of roller and rarer warblers (barred and yellow browed warblers; red-breasted fly catcher), on the way to, or on Lindisfarne, with David Atkins. The December birding outing at Aberlady was the worst I can ever remember from the point of view of the birds we saw, but the Christmas lunch that followed more than made up for it as an enjoyable, well-attended social occasion. A long weekend trip by minibus was organised to Islay last November. We saw most of our target species though we were a bit short on raptors, no doubt as a result of the high winds. The latter kept us guessing about whether we were to get on, and then off the island, but didn't mar the trip. My thanks to all the volunteer leaders who spend time planning their outings and making them run so smoothly in spite of the weather and the numbers that sometimes turn up unexpectedly. If you do intend to come on an outing please inform the outings organiser beforehand, so we can take the minimum number of cars, share the costs and reduce our impact on the environment.

Finally, my sincere thanks to all the many members who provide unsung services to the branch and Waterston House throughout the year. As another SOC year of indoor meetings come to a close, get out and enjoy your birding. If I don't see you on one of the summer outings, take care until we meet up again in September.

Jacky Robinson, April 2007

Receipts & Payments Account for Year to 31 March

INCOME	Sale of Bird Reports Donations at Meetings Other Total Income	£ 1,287 601 26	£1,9140
EXPENSES	Bird Reports Meetings – Speakers, Coffee etc Branch Newsletters (4) Other Total Expenses	908 485 289 30	1,712
Excess Income Brought forward from 2005/6 ACCOUNT BALANCE as at 31/03/2007			202 1,597 £ 1,799

A full copy of the accounts is available from treasurer John P Pringle, jppringle@btinternet.com.