



Kent Ornithological Society
Providing information about Birds and Birdwatching in Kent

Executive Committee

**Minutes of a Meeting held on Thursday 23 March 2016 at 7:00pm
At West Faversham Community Centre, Bysing Wood Road, Faversham, Kent
ME13 7RH**

Present: Martin Coath, (Chair), Jack Chantler, Mike Henty, Andy Lawson, Norman McCanch, Keith Privett, Chris Roome, Brendan Ryan and Stephen Wood.

1. Chairman's welcome

Apologies for absence were received from: Ken Lodge, Robin Mace, Tony Morris, Geoff Orton, Ray O'Reilly, Anthea Skiffington, and Barry Wright.

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2015 were accepted as an accurate record.

2. Publicity and Website

BR reported that KOS now has 568 twitter and 317 facebook followers, and numbers continue to grow steadily. Even some notable technophobes are now visiting and posting on the facebook page, and use of the KOS Forum has declined in proportion. Members discussed the relative merits of the site remaining open to all comers, or being restricted to paid-up KOS members, and the overwhelming balance of opinion was in favour of it remaining open. C pointed out that most new members are now recruited via facebook, and initiate and renew their subscriptions by means of PayPal, and this saves considerable administrative effort.

BR said that some work remains outstanding on the KOS website, for instance the photo gallery and trip reports, and CR suggested there should be direct links to renew subscriptions and to email KOS.

SW noted that very few postings had been made on the Forum in the last year and that it was in effect redundant. Members were in agreement that it had outlived its

usefulness and should be closed down. BR agreed to remove the link from the website.

Action: Brendan Ryan

BR raised the matter of procuring a new display stand for use at meetings. Several members and others had commented on the rather amateur display materials that had been used during the *Atlas* launch, and he believed that we should invest in something more appealing to the eye. He agreed to research this and to circulate more information and costs when available.

Action: Brendan Ryan

3. Membership

CR discussed his proposal to abolish the concessionary rate of £9.00, which until now has been available on application to the Membership Secretary. The Executive Committee approved the proposal and CR will contact those affected by the change.

Action: Chris Roome

4. Kent Bird Report

KP reported that *KBR 2014* is nearly ready to be sent to the printer, and should be delivered to members within the next few weeks. The Chairman thanked Keith and his colleagues for their continuing efforts.

Action: Keith Privett

5. Kent Breeding Bird Atlas

SW and NM summarised recent discussion concerning the proposed winter atlas. The original data used to produce the distribution maps have still not been located, and without these it will not be possible to progress the project. NM also expressed considerable doubt as to the adequacy of the data even if recovered, and felt that observations recorded at different times and at different locations through successive winter periods could not usefully be pooled to give an accurate picture of distribution. He pointed out that while distribution in the breeding season remained consistent during any given year, the same could not be said of winter distribution, which could shift significantly within a single season.

BR felt that it would be difficult to justify the expense of the project, and that a print-run of 500 copies would be the most that could be expected to be sold.

SW agreed to keep the EC informed of further developments.

Action: Stephen Wood

6. *KOS News*

NM reported that the latest issue of the newsletter is ready to go online and carries an obituary for Owen Sweeney and an article by Andrew Appleton on Hayesden Lake as well as the usual features. It is equivalent to 30 to 32 pages in length, and as the printed version is limited to 24 pages, the latter will necessarily have to be paired down.

Norman also announced that he hoped to increase the frequency of publication to bimonthly during 2017, which members agreed would be very welcome.

Action: Norman McCanch

7. Treasurer's Report

MH referred to his previously circulated report (**Attachment A**).

Sales of the *Atlas* had been poor and have now settled down to around four copies a month. MH expressed his disappointment that so few KOS members had bought a copy.

The costs of production of the *KBR* have not increased as much as was projected and this has saved almost £600.

MH stated that he did not consider it necessary to increase the subscription rate above its present £12pa.

Action: Mike Henty

8. Indoor Meetings

The Chairman reported that AS had stepped down from organising the indoor meeting programme and that in view of declining attendances –averaging 10-20 – it was time to consider the future of the programme. Several members cited the rise of online birding websites and social media as an underlying reason for the declining popularity of indoor meetings, and the unattractive prospect of having to travel many miles at night in winter as another. It was generally felt that some recent events had not been pitched at a level appropriate to the experience and knowledge of the audience.

BR suggested that half-day conference-style meetings with 3 or 4 speakers might be more popular, while MC pointed out that members' meetings were also usually quite well attended.

As a result of discussion it was decided to cancel the 2016-17 programme and BR agreed to draft a report and recommendations for the EC to consider.

The Chairman and members noted their warm appreciation of Anthea's work, and she will be asked to remain on the EC as an ordinary member.

Action: Martin Coath, Brendan Ryan

9. Outdoor Meetings

Discussion was postponed in the absence of RO.

Action: Ray O'Reilly

10. Editorial & Records Sub-Committee

In the absence of BW, discussion was postponed

Action: Barry Wright

11. Conservation & Surveys Sub-Committee

NM reported on the recent discussions in the Sub Committee including the proposed Lower Thames Crossing. The EC agreed that our stance should be to support the position of the RSPB that all the current proposals are unwelcome and damaging to the environment, but that the least damaging version of Option C was preferred. This involves a link road from the A2 to a tunnel portal to the west of Higham.

NM further reported that he had been contacted by The Hawk Conservancy Trust, a charity based at Andover, Hants (and not to be confused with The Hawk and Owl Trust). The Trust wishes to expand its research activity and had requested assistance from KOS members. NM would be publicising this in *KOSNews*.

A KOS member had complained that commercial forestry at Hemsted Forest might be having an adverse effect on breeding Nightjars. NM had discussed this with a conservation manager at Forestry Enterprise who had welcomed his interest and expressed a willingness to cooperate with KOS in any way they could.

Action: Norman McCanch

12. Any other business

Sussex Ornithological Society

AL reported on his recent discussions with the Sussex Ornithological Society (**Attachment B**) and felt that there were several examples of their procedure and activities that we should consider adopting. SOS has around 2000 members, which is far more than KOS, despite the similar population size of the two counties, and their income is considerably greater. There are more similarities than differences between the societies however, and they, like us place considerable emphasis on their website and on-line communications. AL noted that SOS have links to schools and colleges, and their AGM is combined with a scientific conference. He also reported on aspects of their committee structures.

A wide-ranging discussion followed and AL agreed to follow up several ideas generated. The Chairman and members thanked him for his efforts.

Action: Andy Lawson

13. Time and date of next meeting

Wednesday 23 November 2016 at 7.00pm at West Faversham Community Centre

Attachment A

KOS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - TREASURER'S REPORT

MEETING ON 23rd MARCH 2016

2015 Accounts

The accounts for 2015 have been approved by the independent examiner Keith Ellis.

Kent Breeding Bird Atlas

The costs and income for the year were as follows:

Production (1,045 copies)	6,959
Design	3,665
Storage	195
Postage & packing	549
Total Costs	11,368
Less: amount allocated to Stock	(500)
Less: sales in the year	(6,081)
Less: Donations re Jim Martin	(345)
Net Charge to B of K Fund	£4,942

The requirement to value the stock of books remaining at 31st December 2015 at the lower of cost or net realisable value necessitated the estimation of what might be sold during 2016. A conservative view was taken and the stock was valued at £500.

Sales during the year amounted to £6,081 representing the sale of less than 500 copies. The family of Jim Martin requested that any donations made in his memory be allocated to a specific project and the atlas was the most appropriate. As can be seen in the Notes to the Accounts, the a net deficit £4,942 has been charged to the Birds of Kent Fund. In 2013 £552 for producing the maps for the atlas and in 2014 £216 related to software updates had also been charged against this Fund.

Regular Activities

Subscriptions £7,521

Up by £179 on 2014; no doubt the result of being able to buy an atlas for £15 rather than £22.50. How many will renew?

Gift Aid £823

Up by £4 but given mortality and other losses it does mean that Chris has been getting new members to sign up.

Donations £1,054

Donations re Jim Martin of £345 relate to the Atlas (see above) leaving £709. Of this, £500 was a legacy from Ray Cordero.

Interest £332

Down by £40 as a result of further pruning of interest rates and use of funds for the Atlas.

Meetings £172

Down by £52 reflecting the severe fall in attendances at indoor meetings.

Sales of KBR £246

Back up to near the average level of recent years; 2014 was exceptionally low.

Sale of DVD £20

Still interest being shown!

Cost of producing the KBR £5,603

My estimate for inflation used in the 2014 accounts was too high, resulting in the cost of the 2013 KBR being less than forecast and requiring the over-provision to be written back in 2015 together with a reduction in the provision for the 2014 KBR, totalling a £597 favourable adjustment.

Other Printing, etc. £649

Down £46 on 2014

Meetings £679

Of this total, £162 relates Executive Committee meetings (2014 – zero) leaving £517 for Indoor Meetings; this compares with £623 for 2014.

Insurance £113

No change for a few years.

Website & IT expenses £1,459

The increase over 2014 is the cost of getting the new website up and running in 2015. It is not known what level of expenditure to expect on an on-going basis.

Depreciation £130

We have now fully written off the costs of our laptops and projector.

General Fund

There was a surplus on our regular activities in the year of £1,190 that has been credited to the General Fund.

Bank Account Balances

As at 9th March our total funds were £46,127

Cash, current, PayPal & deposit accounts £16,882
 90-Day Account £8,301
 Barclays Bond (12 month to November 2016) £20,944

Kent Ornithological Society

Charity No. 212489

Annual Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2015

2014	<u>Statement of Financial Activities</u>	2015
	Income	
7,342	Subscriptions, net of PayPal fees (£36, 2014 £36)	7,521
819	Income tax recovered under Gift Aid	823
577	Donations	1,054
372	Interest	332
224	Meetings	172
-	Sale of Kent Breeding Bird Atlas	6,081
34	Sale of Kent Bird Reports	246
20	Sale of DVD	20
9,388		16,249
	Expenditure	
	Estimated cost of 2015 KBR	6,200
7,373	Over-provision for earlier KBRs	(597)
695	Other Printing, Postage, Stationery, etc.	5,603
623	Meetings	649
113	Insurance	679
555	Website & IT Expenses	113
216	Costs of Atlas of Breeding Birds	1,459
198	Sundry Purchases	11,368
140	Depreciation of Computers & Equipment	-
9,913		130
(525)	Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	20,001
32,237	Total Reserves brought forward	(3,752)
31,712	Total Reserves carried forward	31,712
		27,960

2014	<u>Balance Sheet</u>	2015
	Assets	
130	Tangible Fixed Assets:	[Note (b)]
	Current Assets:	-
28,904	Barclays Bond & CAF 90 Day A/c	29,234
12,732	Cash at Bank - Current & PayPal A/cs	8,547

2,472	Cash at Bank - Deposit A/c	2,473	
119	Cash in Hand	97	40,351
269	Debtors & Prepayments		113
	Stock (Atlas)		500
<u>44,626</u>			<u>40,964</u>
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities:			
	Provision for KBRs	12,000	
12,914	Other Creditors	1,004	13,004
<u>31,712</u>	Net Assets		<u>27,960</u>
16,876	Birds of Kent Fund		11,934
14,836	General Fund		16,026
<u>31,712</u>			<u>27,960</u>
			0

Kent Ornithological Society

Charity No. 212489

Annual accounts for the year ended 31st December 2015

Notes to the Accounts

Note (a): Movements in Reserves

	Birds of Kent Fund	General Fund	Total Reserves
	£	£	£
2015 Opening balances 01/01/2015	16,876	14,836	31,712
Sales of Atlas	6,081		6,081
Donations in memory of Jim Martin	345		345
Atlas costs & expenses	(11,368)		(11,368)
Surplus on ordinary activities		1,190	1,190
Closing balances 31/12/2015	<u>11,934</u>	<u>16,026</u>	<u>27,960</u>
2014 Opening balances 01/01/2014	17,092	15,145	32,237
Movement in the Year	(216)	(309)	(525)
Closing balances 31/12/2014	<u>16,876</u>	<u>14,836</u>	<u>31,712</u>

The income and expenditure related to the **Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-13** has been allocated to the Birds of Kent Fund; the balance is allocated to the General Fund

Note (b): Movements in Tangible Fixed Assets

2014

2015

£	<u>Computers & equipment</u>	£
270	Net Book Value brought forward 01/01/2015	130
-	Purchases in the year	-
(140)	Less: Depreciation for the year	(130)
<u>130</u>	Net Book Value carried forward 31/12/2015	<u>-</u>

M V Henty
Hon. Treasurer

Attachment B

To Andy Lawson, Kent Ornithological Society.

Reference your email of 10th February and my brief response, here are some notes about the set up within the SOS and how we work.

SOS membership currently stands at just over 2000 members and much like the KOS I suspect the bulk of our members are probably aged 50 and over. As I mentioned we do have eight under 18 members and four student members. Some of the under 18s are already taking a serious interest in helping the Society in a number of ways.

Our present subscription rate for Full membership is £14, with Joint members living at the same address paying £17. Under 18s and Students (age 18-20) pay £4.50. We have a Life membership category (£200) and a Joint Life membership (£250). We currently have 122 Life/Joint Life memberships.

Members receive a quarterly newsletter and a copy of our annual Sussex Bird Report. A programme of walks/outings is arranged each year for members. These are to venues spread (hopefully evenly!) across the county and beyond, and each is led by a local, experienced birder who knows the area well. These events thus show members new and unfamiliar birding spots away from their local patch. Our leaders will help new and inexperienced birders to improve their field identification skills. Occasionally we have arranged specific outings for birding "beginners", and we aim to make some annual outings "family friendly" and public transport accessible.

The Society was set up in 1962 so it has taken many years to gain the current level of membership. We reached the 1500 mark in 2000 and stayed around the 1500/1600 level until 2011/2012 when we almost reached the 1700 mark. The leap to the current total has largely been achieved with the publicity attached to the publication of our new book "*The Birds of Sussex*" in 2014 which we were able to offer at a special price including a discounted one year's membership of the Society. Our ability to achieve this was largely due to the generosity of members who sponsored individual species accounts in advance of publication, either in their name or perhaps in memory of someone. This sponsorship raised over £30,000 towards the publication costs, and enabled us to keep the cover price so reasonable at £25 (pre-publication) and £35 (post publication).

Our website is the main source of new members, with application forms and standing order forms being downloadable from the site. We still attract a few members with leaflets displayed at events and at some reserve and visitor centres but the website accounts for more than 90% of applications. Our Webmaster and Sightings Team do a great job for the Society, with the site attracting many visits every day. The sightings page is the most popular feature, being updated daily with many sightings from across the county. We recently expanded the team who look after and vet the sightings to five persons to ease the workload which until recently had been carried by one of our previous Recorders.

All of the Society Officers and Committee members are volunteers and they get no "perks" in return for the enormous contribution that they collectively make to ensure the efficient and effective running of the Society.

Meeting on a regular basis throughout the year our "governing body" is the SOS Council, consisting of the Officers and up to 6 Ordinary Members all of whom are proposed and voted for at our AGM. All Council members serve for a period of five years but a Council member who takes on an Officer post (say Secretary, Recorder etc.) may serve a further five

years in that post. Alongside the Council and reporting to it we have a Scientific Committee, a Membership & Publicity Committee, SOS Records Committee (SOSRC) and a small Programme Committee. Each of these Committees may contain one or more Council members. Each committee keeps Council informed by the provision of meeting minutes and must seek Council approval for any major decisions or changes that they propose.

The Scientific Committee is responsible for all aspects of bird surveying and recording, the vetting of records of scarce and rare species through the SOSRC, the organisation of survey work and the production of the annual Sussex Bird Report. On this Committee we are exceedingly fortunate to have an extremely energetic and committed Database Manager who looks after all aspects of the computing and software that enable the Society to maintain the huge database of bird record data that results from all the survey work and individuals recording. A team of volunteers helps with the input of data but this officer produces all the software routines to extract the data necessary for species accounts, survey results, distribution maps etc. Our Database Manager wishes to retire and we are currently trying to establish a team to take over from him. In addition our Webmaster and a non-member colleague of his are developing a new recording database as the current one is nearing obsolescence.

We are also fortunate to have a very motivated and “professional” BTO Rep for Sussex as a Scientific Committee member who organises and runs training courses for survey workers and with our network of 10km stewards ensures the best coverage possible for all BTO and our own Society surveys. She has also recently appointed an Assistant BTO Rep. During the Atlas fieldwork she set up a very well-used Yahoo e-mail group (Sussex BTO) which continues to be used for communications, feedback, requests for survey volunteers, plus questions and advice for and by those involved in various surveys.

In terms of the production of the annual Sussex Bird Report, working closely and under the guidance of our Bird Report Editor, we are able to call on the services of a number of skilled volunteers who write the species accounts, provide additional scientific papers and assist with proof reading.

The Membership and Publicity Committee meet regularly to discuss and consider all aspects of how the Society presents itself and attracts new members. This includes the quarterly newsletter, its Editor being a Committee member, and the website design and functionality. This Committee is responsible for all aspects of the setup, content and running of the Society's annual Conference, where one member takes on the bulk of the work (the Conference Organiser), its AGM and publicity stalls at various events throughout Sussex – though having sold out of “The Birds of Sussex” this last exercise will be much more low key than it was in 2014. It also organises a “President’s Evening” which is a social evening for volunteers where they can meet with others to chat, plus a New Year Bird Race which over the past few years has raised an average of £1500 p.a. for our conservation fund.

One of the M & P Committee members is keen on social media and has kindly taken on keeping up to date Facebook and Twitter accounts for us, which we hope will attract younger members and keep them on board.

The Programme Committee devises the annual programme of walks/outings and arrange for leaders for each event. They organise the printing of the programme, which currently doubles up as a membership card, and the new programme is mailed out to members with the Winter newsletter and subscription reminder in December.

Members are able to receive the quarterly newsletter via email as a pdf file instead of a printed copy if they wish.

You will have noted that despite the size of the SOS we still rely on a relatively small number of Officers and Committee (some of whom are real key players!) to organise all aspects of the running of the Society and although we have usually been able to find replacements when Officers/Committee Members retire, certain of our current key players will be very hard to replace!

