

## **Minutes of the OBC 36<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting held by Zoom on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

### **Present:**

#### **Council Members**

John Gregory (JG) – Chairman  
Mike Edgecombe (ME) – Acting Treasurer and Meetings Officer  
Richard Thomas (RT) – Website Officer and Membership Support  
Paul Insua-Cao (PI) – Incoming Chairman Conservation Committee  
Simon Roddis (SR) – Publications Committee  
Billy Rodger (BR) – Sales Officer  
Ding Li Yong (DLY) – Asian Liaison Officer  
Chris Goodie (CG) – Vice Chairman and Promotions Officer  
Drew Lyness (DL) – Social Media Officer  
Russell Childs (RC) – Incoming Secretary  
Alex Berryman (AB) – Strategy Officer  
Tim Loseby – (TL) Photographic Editor

#### **OBC members in attendance:**

Arjun Sinsinwar, Bas Van Balen, Chris Bachin, Chris Lotz, Chris Storey, Colin Heap, David Fisher, Dick Filby, Dimas Haryo Pradans, Dora Zarzavatsaki, Duncan McNiven, Gary Wiles, James Eaton, Jens Toettrup, Jessica Borer, John Cole, Javed Moorty, Le Quy Minh, Matthew Rodgers, M Obadul Haque, Michael Grunwell, Nathan Craske, Nigel Redman, Nyein Chan, Pankaj Maheria, Paul Thompson, Peter Nichols, Raj Gorpil Patil, Robert Grimmond, Philip Round, Sayam Chowdhury, Scott Pursner, Simon Mahood, Sujan Chatterjee, Tony Sawbridge, Vidyaman Thapa.

### **1. Introduction from Chairman John Gregory**

Members were welcomed. The format of the meeting was introduced and the process for voting explained. A recording was made of the meeting. Each council member introduced themselves.

Thanks, and acknowledgments were given to Brian and Margaret Sykes and Frank Rheindt for all their considerable voluntary work in producing our quality publications Birding Asia and Forktail. The club have a newly formed conservation team and we welcome new members Graham Hirons, Duncan McNiven, John Martin and Paul Thompson and special thanks to resigning member Conservation Chairman Dave Buckingham who will continue to provide valuable background support. Thanks were given to our country reps and overseas conservation officers in the region. Thanks was also given to the work of our Birdfair Team : Giles and Renee Braithwaite and Tempe Mansfield. Special thanks were given to the three resigning council officers in 2020 Jo Thomas, Tony Sawbridge and Dave Buckingham. Finally, the Chair expressed his thanks to Graham Spinks our club accountant and Charity Commission advisor.

The Chair also welcomed Vivian Fu. Based in Korea; Vivian is working on a campaign to promote migratory waterbirds in the region.

## **2. Approval of the minutes for the 35th AGM held at Cley Village Hall on the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2019**

The minutes had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. There were no matters arising.

The 2019 minutes were presented for approval

Proposer – Simon Roddis

Seconder – Dick Filby

**The 2019 AGM minutes were approved unanimously by meeting attendees.**

## **3. Treasurer Report (2019 Financial Statement and outlook for 2020). Mike Edgecombe - Acting Treasurer**

The Financial Statements for 2019 were produced in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) 2005. The report had been previously circulated to meeting attendees.

As at December 2019 the club had 1799 members which included 159 honorary members. There was an operating surplus of £4,144 with reserves of £211,533 of which £ 147,531 were unrestricted reserves.

The club received donations to its conservation fund from the following corporate sponsors: WildWings, Sunbird, BirdQuest, AEC (Asia Ecological Conservation, Birdtour Asia, Nature Safari India, Rockjumper Bird Tours, Whale and Dolphin and Limosa. In addition, OBC received \$23,000 from the March Conservation Fund.

Our thanks to our corporate sponsors for their continued donations to the OBC conservation fund.

The club received gifts towards the OBC price draw from the following sponsors Swarovski, Strix Editions, Bagh Resorts, Cley Spey

Our thanks to our sponsors for their continued support for our annual OBC prize draw.

The Club remains in sound financial health.

### **3.1 Approval of the 2019 OBC Financial Statements**

The 2019 Financial Statements were presented for approval.

Proposer- Chris Goodie

Seconder- Sujan Chatterjee

**The financial statements were approved unanimously by meeting attendees.**

### **3.2 Approval to re- elect the Independent Examiner**

Council proposed the re-election of Mrs Frances Clarke ACA as the Cub's Independent Examiner

Proposer – Russell Childs

Secunder – Billy Rodger

**The re-appointment of Frances Clarke was approved unanimously by meeting attendees.**

### **4. Coronavirus.**

The Chair gave an overview of the impact of Coronavirus in the Oriental Region; some positive but largely negative impacts on wildlife; a call to action for OBC to do more to help in these uncertain times.

### **5. Publications**

#### **5.1 Forktail and Birding Asia**

On behalf of OBC Council the Chair sincerely apologised for the delay in publications which have fallen some 6-12 months behind. There have been various issues with editorial boards and the publications process.

The good news is that the Club has recently secured Professor Frank Rheindt from the University of Biology in Singapore as our new Forktail Editor-in-Chief. Frank has a new look publications team working with him and is aiming to publish Forktail 2020 in early 2021 and to get this publication fully back on track by Q3 of 2021.

The first 2020 BirdingASIA (BA33) is about to be published and will be the Club's first publication to be available digitally. OBC Council is working on a process to get BirdingASIA back on schedule by the end of 2021.

#### **5.2 Packaging**

The Club is using up last of its stock of plastic wrapping before moving to a recyclable option in 2021.

### **5.3 Going digital**

The Club is finally entering the digital age as stated above. BirdingASIA 33 is our first publication to be available for digital download. 25% of the membership have already taken up this option.

The Club operates a very favourable price structure with a student and Asia based online membership from £12.00 and an individual online rate at £15.00. OBC is entirely run by volunteers; this enables us to provide membership at value pricing. The Club now offers a new lifetime membership at £600 and were pleased to welcome four new life members this year.

Despite our issues with publications the Chair expressed is hope that members would bear with us as we look to rectify our current publication challenges.

## **6. Conservation**

### **6.1 Conservation Team**

We have strengthened our conservation team to enhance our charitable giving programme. Paul Insua-Cao has come on board as Conservation Chairman alongside Duncan McNiven and Graham Hiron who will be helping with small grants. Paul Thompson helps with larger grants and John Martin with project reporting and social media. Our strategy going forward is to have a more pro- active focus, working with our conservation officers in the region to identify and tender for worthy and needy projects.

### **6.2 Conservation Projects**

Since 1994 OBC has donated over £400,000 towards research and conservation efforts in the region; since the club formed in 1985 our giving is estimated to be more than £500 000.

This year we have supported amongst others:

- Helmeted Hornbills , supporting the work of Chloe Hatten university of Hong Kong with the development of Helmeted Hornbill educational kits for enforcement purposes in Hong Kong.
- The Javan and Bali big day; a project designed to engage with local communities to develop an awareness of nature and the plight of songbirds.
- Research and monitoring of the rare Sula Hornbill
- A project supporting and safeguarding a population of the declining Yellow-breasted Bunting in Cambodia.

### 6.3 Grant Structure

OBC Council are in the process of updating our grant application process. We aim to make it easier to apply for our grants and at the same time offer more substantial awards for deserving projects. We now have three levels of grants.

- i. **Small Grants** – this is our standard award, but we have increased the higher level from £1,500 to £3,000.
- ii. **Seed Grants** – this is a small and easy to apply for grant. Council have earmarked £5,000 per annum to be offered for Seed Grants. We expect these to be in the region of £500 to £1,000. Our first example looks like being a project to support Forest Owlet at Tansa Wildlife Reserve north of Mumbai.
- iii. **Larger Grants** – these are likely to be an exception rather than the norm and would be at higher levels than the other grants and require robust due diligence. This year we have donated a large sum to Cikananga Captive Breeding Program in W Java. This is a critical project aimed at preserving and ultimately releasing to the wild such iconic species as Javan Green Magpie, Black-winged Myna and Rufous-throated Laughingthrush. All these species have been severely impacted by the Asian Songbird Trade. Cikananga has seen a temporary shortage of operating funds. OBC decided that this was very much an appropriate use of the club's funds.

We are also exploring how we may be able to support the conservation of Gurney's Pitta in a political sensitive landscape in Burma the Spoon-billed Sandpiper project in Thailand.

### 6.4 Grant Translation.

To facilitate more grant applications, we are providing local language translations of the conservation page on the OBC website; to date we have translated into Bahasa Indonesia and Vietnamese. We hope that this will make easier for local nationals to apply for our conservation awards.

## 7. Meetings

OBC are strategically seeking to develop our partnerships in the region. We aim to achieve this through revitalising our country representative network led by Ding Li Yong – our Asian Liaison Officer based in Singapore. Our strategy is to be pro- active in connecting with local NGO's and stakeholders. To this end we recognise the importance of local network gatherings and zoom meetings.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 saw the cancellation of Birdfair and MigFest; we sincerely hope that these events will be back on the agenda in 2021. However, prior to lockdown around 20 OBC members attended the first Asian Birdlife Festival in Bangkok. OBC held a side

meeting for these members where we discussed how best to prioritise OBC giving to species and countries. Following this meeting an OBC representative travelled to E Java to participate in the Big Month and liaise with the founders of this initiative: 'Burung Nesia' and 'Birdpackers'.

## **8. Legacies and Donations.**

We are extremely grateful for the following gifts to OBC in 2020

- A significant legacy from the estate of late Terrace Michael Corkett.
- A donation from Frazer McConnell who has a passion for Sumatran birds.
- Telescopes, Binoculars, and a gift £2,000 from the estate of the late Keith Lyons (also known as Dipper to his close friends). The cash gift is specifically for the purchase and provision of binoculars to birdwatchers and OBC members in the region. OBC council has agreed to double this monetary gift and will be working with the optics supplier (and new corporate sponsor) Cley Spy to provide an appropriate quality of binocular.

## **9. Social Media and Website**

We are experiencing increasing access to our social media platforms and see this as a way for the club to connect with a younger generation of birdwatchers and scholars. We are always looking for interesting and informative blogs and news of birds and conservation in the region and would encourage members to submit anything that they would like to put out to a wider audience. Our social media outlets actively encourage people to access our website and learn more about our Club. To facilitate this, we have revamped our internet capability; thanks to Richard Thomas for his dedication to completely redesigning the website.

## **10. Campaigns**

OBC are supporting the East Asia Flyway partnership EAFP to protect migrating waterbirds. Vivian Fu, Ding Li Yong, Sayam Chowdhury initiated a campaign to look at endangered water birds on migration This involves a photographic competition with photographers being invited to submit photographs of critically endangered waterbirds and waders plus leg flags. The aim is to create awareness and build up the scientific knowledge of this important flyway. We would also like to convert more photographers into active conservationists.

## **11. Country Representatives**

OBC welcomed our new Indonesian country representative Francesca Noni. Noni has recently submitted a grant proposal aimed at working with fisherman in the Java Sea to protect against by-catch of Christmas Island Frigatebirds.

## **12. OBC Birdwatching Tours**

OBC tours have been suspended due to COVID 19 but we do look forward to running them with our travel sponsors again once travel restrictions are lifted. We realise the times are not great for our travel sponsors. We have notified them that we will not be asking for sponsorship in 2020 and look forward to welcoming them back in 2021 when hopefully COVID 19 will be behind us.

## **13. Election of Council Officers 2020**

The Chair paid tribute to the members of Council who are standing down for 2020. Special thanks were given to Jo Thomas, Dave Buckingham and Tony Sawbridge for their support to the club over many years.

### **13.1 Council Members**

The following OBC council members agreed to stand for re-election:

John Gregory  
Mike Edgecombe  
Alex Berryman  
Chris Gooddie  
Simon Rodis  
William Rodger  
Di Ling Yong  
Richard Thomas  
Drew Lyness  
Tim Loseby

Proposed -Dick Filby  
Seconder – Nigel Redman

**The re-elections were approved unanimously by meeting attendees.**

### **13.2 New Council Members**

The following agreed to stand for election to the OBC Council for the first time:

Paul Insua Cao – Conservation Chairman  
Russell Childs – Club Secretary  
Vivian Fu – Campaigns  
Syan Chowdhury – Conservation

Proposer – Nigel Redman  
Secunder – Jessica Borer

**The elections were approved unanimously by meeting attendees.**

### **13.3 Council Officers.**

The following agreed to stand as Officers of the Club:

Chair – John Gregory  
Vice Chair – Chris Gooddie  
Treasure – Mike Edgecombe  
Secretary – Russell Childs.

Proposer – Nigel Redman  
Secunder – Jessica Borer

**The elections were approved unanimously by meeting attendees.**

### **14. Any other business.**

There was no AOB. The Chair announced that the 36th AGM was now closed.

Meeting ends.