

## DAVID FISHER (1954-2021)

On 22<sup>nd</sup> May the NBC family lost a tireless supporter. David had been there from the very start as a founder member.

Thereafter he contributed to the Club in so many ways; two spells as Chairman (2009-2011 and 2015 until his passing), numerous articles in our journals and a portfolio of photographs including a close up of an Andean Flicker that graced the front cover of *Neotropical Birding* 21. That was a special photo because he had taken it in Chile when participating in a fundraising trip that he had done so much to get off the ground. All of these showed the public face of David, visible to the NBC membership, but like a Coscoroba Swan *Coscoroba coscoroba* there was so much more going on below the surface.

In his time as Chairman, he would spend hours a week tending to so many jobs that there was little at the NBC that did not have David's fingerprints all over it, whether it was representing the Club at meetings with like-minded organisations, reviewing approaches to the Club for resources, assisting fund raising, meticulously correcting draft papers for Council or firefighting the problems that inevitably arise for any charity. Notwithstanding the time and stress all of this involved he did it with a quiet efficiency because it was one way he could contribute to the conservation of the Neotropical birds that he cherished so much.

His approach to chairing NBC Council was a microcosm of the way he served the Club. Three times a year Council would meet. On each occasion there was no doubt David was in total control of proceedings. With courtesy and an acute grasp of the detail he would ensure each item on the agenda was thoroughly addressed and every member had their say but in the end there would be a decision and through David's skill he would navigate Council to the best outcome.

Of course, there was much more to David than his role at the NBC. His early years were spent growing up in Cardiff and that's where his first birdwatching took place. It was not long before he crossed the River Severn into that foreign land called 'England'. Free time while at Weymouth College of Education presented the opportunity to visit Radipole Lake to see more new birds and make more lifetime friendships with other birders. Soon his insatiable appetite for yet more new birds demanded some birding beyond the English Channel. Once that had happened there would be no end of places he wanted to see. All seven continents were visited



DAVID THE PHOTOGRAPHER

NBC Fundraiser Chile 2016

but there was never any doubt that the Neotropics was where his heart lay; after all for a 'bird' man like David the bird continent had to be the place to be. His keen eye, identification nous, strong communication skills, depth of bird & birding knowledge and unending patience with less gifted birders made him a natural bird tour leader; mostly with Sunbird. Eventually, those non-birding skills he had picked up while in Weymouth were deployed as managing director of Sunbird. Even after he retired from that position, he remained a director of the company with a hand on the financial tiller and an invaluable sounding board for new ideas. These talents he also used for a number of conservation & birding bodies such as OSME and the British Ornithologists' Club and, of course, the NBC.

David was an intensely private man who spoke little about his family, financial donations to many organisations or his manifold achievements. There was also little evidence of any raw emotion. But sometimes, if you were lucky, you could just catch a glimpse of another side to David. There was the knowing smile when thrashing everyone in a bird ID competition. Then the pride in his voice (with that hint of a South Wales accent), when recounting, especially to any Englishman he could corner, how Wales had won the Six Nations Rugby Championship in 2021. Best of all was that quiet satisfaction that you could see all over his face when he knew he had nailed a great photo that would be his next electronic Christmas card to go to his legion of friends. And David had plenty of friends and admirers. If you wanted information on where to go birding David was the source to tap into. You knew he would be generous with his knowledge and unsparing of his time. Undoubtedly, he would have been to where you needed to go. With a quick flick of the computer mouse he would access his digital records and not only relay the birds he had seen there but give you date, place, weather and what he had eaten while there!

In the last few years David was hit by a series of major illnesses. Personifying the words of the Bard Dylan Thomas David did not lament his ill fortune but rather would 'rage, rage against the dying of the light'. But as ever with David there was no external sign of fury but rather an internal steely determination to carry on doing what had to be done to help the NBC and others and to do it without fuss. The overseas birding continued apace. David was no 'twitcher' but he did have a list of birds that he really really wanted to see. It was only UK government lockdown restrictions that robbed David of more new birds. Even so, always working within the rules, David would visit local sites in Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire plus the odd trip to Frampton marshes in Lincolnshire or Cley in Norfolk with his Sandy birding pals. Afterwards for those who had not had the good fortune to be with him he would relate, with schoolboy enthusiasm, the birds he had seen and encourage you to get out and enjoy those special places for nature.

After the trips, it was back to the 'day job' of steering the NBC. With David at the helm the Club was in safe hands. Sometimes he would sit back and allow others to take things on. But if there was any chance of going off-course a missive would come from David with a gentle nudge to get back on track. There was never any doubt that David was the person leading from the front and ensuring all key tasks would be done. That is one of many reasons why David will be sorely missed by everyone at the Club.

Today the NBC is poorer without David but so much richer for his contribution over many years. He had made a material difference to Neotropical bird conservation. Thank you David.

*Raymond Jeffers*