**DRAFT/RJJ/14.7.17**

**Minutes of the 24th Annual General Meeting of the Neotropical Bird Club.**

The Annual General Meeting of the Neotropical Bird Club was held on Thursday 13 July 2017 at 19:45 at the Embassy of Brazil, 14-16 Cockspur Street, London, SW1Y 5BL.

**Council members present:**

David Fisher (NBC Chairman and Chairman of the meeting), Chris Balchin (Secretary) and Alex Lees.

The Chairman opened the meeting and noted there were sufficient members present for the meeting to be quorate.

**1. Apologies for absence.**

The Chairman reported apologies for absence from the following:

Clive Byers, Rob Clay, Chris Collins, John Clark, Mike Dawson, Tim Doran, Lee Dingain, Gordon Ellis, Roberta Goodall, Anna Hughes, Rob Leighton, James Lowen, Manuel Sanchez, Chris Sharpe, Tom Stuart, Michael Webster, Paula Webster, Charles Wilkins and Rob Williams.

**2. Minutes of 23rd. Annual General Meeting**

The Chairman referred to the draft minutes of the 23rd AGM (2016) prepared for the meeting.

**A motion proposed by Alex Lees and seconded by Chris Balchin to approve the minutes of the 2016 AGM was put to the meeting for a vote and was carried unanimously.**

**3. Matters Arising.**

There were no matters arising.

**4. Chairman's report for 2016.**

David Fisher (Chairman) delivered his report for 2016. As follows:

“The club had another good year in 2016, although we saw a small fall in membership of 15 over the 2015 level bringing the club’s membership for 2016 to 786. In the absence of our treasurer, Chris Collins, our secretary, Chris Balchin, will shortly give further details of the club’s finances in Chris Collin’s report.

During the year, the NBC continued with the same publications policy of producing one large issue of *Cotinga* and two issues of *Neotropical Birding*. The journals were produced on time and I’d like to thank our editors Guy Kirwan and James Lowen for all their hard work on our publications.

All three publications contained many fascinating articles including, for example, in *Cotinga* papers on the breeding behaviour of Snowy Cotinga, notes on the breeding birds of the Guyana highlands, and notable range and altitudinal records from Cusuco National Park, Honduras, and in *Neotropical Birding* a birding site guide to Puerto Rico, an account of the first record of Whiskered Tern for South America and a guide to birding the north Caribbean part of Costa Rica.

The other major club activity was funding conservation orientated projects through our Conservation Awards programme and during 2016 seven awards were made totalling £18,989which means that over the last 18 years £89,274 has been provided to support Neotropical bird conservation projects.

The seven 2016 awards were for:

A project on the conservation of the endangered Grey-backed Hawk in North-east Peru.

A survey looking for globally endangered bird species in Serra do Urubu, Pernambuco, Brazil using autonomous sound recorders.

Surveys looking for the critically endangered Zapata Rail in Cuba.

An investigation into the illegal trade in Red Siskins in Venezuela

A project to assist in the protection of the critically endangered White-winged Guan in the Tumbesian region of Northern Peru.

A survey in Paraguay on the endangered White-winged Nightjar

And

A project on the poorly known Rufous-faced Crake in Paraguay.

The Conservation Awards programme was managed by Alex Lees, one of our speakers at tonight’s meeting, and by Jeremy Bird and I would like to thank both of them for their hard and dedicated work on the programme.

During the year, the club continued to operate a Facebook page and we now nearly 5000 members on Facebook.

We also now have a Twitter account, which is run by Roberta Goodall and we have more than 650 followers on that. I’d like to thank Roberta for her efforts running this.

In August 2016, the Club had a stand at the Rutland Bird Fair, with the club's main prizes in its annual raffle being a pair of Swarovski EL binoculars. The club would like to thank Swarovski Optik for their ongoing support in providing prizes for this annual fundraising event. And we should also thank Lynx Editions and Wildsounds for donating the other prizes.

On 17 September last year, the Club held a joint meeting with the British Ornithologists’ Club and the Natural History Museum, at the museum in South Kensington, London. The all-day event included five major talks and the club’s Annual General Meeting. The talks were filmed and can be viewed as podcasts via the NBC website.

In December 2016, the US bird tour company WINGS organised a highly successful tour to Chile on behalf of the club with those who participated seeing all of the country’s endemics. The tour generated $10,991 for the club’s Conservation Awards programme.

Talking of which I should also mention that the conservation awards fund has been boosted recently by very generous donations from the March Foundation in the United States and by Lush, the cosmetics company owned by Mark Constantine. As a consequence, we have recently increased the size of the awards that are available and will be able to fund significantly more awards in future years.

It might be appropriate to mention here the support of our Corporate Members, most of whom have been supporting us for many years now. My thanks to all of them.

As always we are looking for new members to join our council. If you would be interested in helping us run the club by joining council and taking on a specific role, please speak to Chris or me after the meeting.

The club would not be able to function without the dedication of our council and I would like to thank them most sincerely, especially Chris Balchin who does the bulk of the club’s admin work as NBC secretary. I have already thanked our editors for their work in producing our excellent publications, but would also like to add thanks to Eng-Li Green who designs both journals, and Mike Dawson of Swallowtail Print, the company that handles our printing, and Raymond Jeffers, who, though not on council is actively involved with NBC providing us with a wealth of invaluable legal advice and also is the main force behind the organisation of the NBC tour programme. And finally, thanks to the RSPB for acting as our postal address and for handling the mailing of our publications at a very advantageous rate, and to Ian Davies and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, who acts as our US postal address.

And just a quick update on the current year. Another great issue of Neotropical Birding was published in the spring, and some of the articles that will be included in this year’s Cotinga are now available on the website. Things are progressing well with the Conservation Awards programme and we funded more projects earlier in the year and will shortly be reviewing the next round of applications. We have been working in association with the other regional birdclubs (OBC, ABC and OSME) on a Birdwatcher’s Code of Conduct and this will shortly be added to our website. And we have been exploring the possibility of offering our publications digitally and will be discussing firm proposals for this at our next council meeting – this coming Saturday. So there has been a lot going on behind the scenes”.

**5. Treasurer's Report and presentation of independently examined accounts for 2016 and Trustees' report 2016.**

Presented by Chris Balchin (Secretary).

“As already mentioned our treasurer is unavailable to attend the meeting so I will present the accounts on his behalf. I will try answer questions at the end of my presentation but please bear in mind I have limited understanding of matters financial.

In summary the accounts show that the club has had a good year and is in a strong position financially

The main thing to notice is that our income has jumped from £46K to nearly £60K. This is mainly due to donations from major benefactors such as the “March Foundation” and our exceptional fund raising trips. These funds are restricted for conservation awards only. The balance of these funds has been distributed in the first half of 2017.

We have also benefited from £5609 from gift aid reclaim cover 2012-2015.

The cost of printing the journals and postage increased by 5.3% which is not that bad, though we are at the mercy of postage, which has a habit of increasing regularly and significantly. To combat this council is looking at ways to reduce these costs, a good example being the move to digital publications as highlighted by the chairman earlier, this will allow us to reduce our postage bill and because of delivery problems, distribute our publications better in the region.

Income from membership increased by 5% which is satisfactory, so I am pleased to say that there is no need to increase membership rates for next year.

I would like to thank our major supporters March foundation, Wings, Swarovski and Birdquest”.

There were no questions from the membership.

**A motion proposed by David Wright and seconded by Alex Lees to approve the independently examined accounts for 2016 and Trustees' report 2016 was put to the meeting for a vote and was carried unanimously.**

**6. Election of Officers.**

The Chairman advised the meeting of those members who had agreed to stand for election

**A motion proposed by Rick Simpson and seconded by Alex Lees to elect the following as members of Council and to hold the office appearing after their name below was put to the meeting for a vote and was carried unanimously: David Fisher (Chair), Chris Collins (Treasurer), and Chris Balchin (Secretary).**

**7. Election of Council.**

The Chairman advised the meeting of those members who had agreed to stand for election for the first time, for re-election and to undertake specific roles (if any).

**A motion proposed by David Wright and seconded by Rick Simpson to elect the following as members of Council was put to the meeting for a vote and was passed unanimously: Rob Clay, Mike Dawson, Carl Downing, Gordon Ellis, Roberta Goodall, Alex Lees (Conservation), Manuel Sanchez, Chris Sharpe, Tom Stuart, Charles Wilkins, Rob Williams and John Thirtle.**

**8. Election of Country Representatives.**

The Chairman advised the meeting of those members who had agreed to serve as NBC Regional Representatives pursuant to Clause 21 of the Club’s Constitution.

**A motion proposed by** **Alex Lees and seconded by Rick Simpson to appoint the following as NBC Regional Representatives** **was put to the meeting for a vote and was passed unanimously:**

***{Argentina:*** *Ignacio Roesler;* ***Belgium:*** *Dr Johan Ingels;* ***Brazil:*** *Andy Foster;* ***Chile:*** *Manuel Marin;* ***Colombia:*** *Diego Calderon;* ***Denmark:*** *Morten Heergaard;* ***Ecuador:*** *Manuel Sanchez Nivicela****; France and French Guiana:*** *Nyls de Pracontal;* ***Italy:*** *Guiseppe Micali;* ***New Zealand:*** *Detlef Davies;* ***Paraguay:*** *Paul Smith;* ***Peru:*** *Rob Williams;* ***Uruguay:*** *Agustín Carriquiry**and* ***Venezuela:*** *David Ascanio.}*

**9. Election of Independent Examiner.**

The Secretary advised the meeting that Michael Goddard was willing tobe re-appointedas independent examiner**.**

**A motion proposed by Alex Lees and seconded by Rick Simpson to re-appoint Michael Goddard as independent examiner was put to the meeting for a vote and was carried unanimously.**

**10. Any other business.**

There was no other business.

**The meeting closed at 20:15**