

Report of the Chairman and Officers 2010

Club membership passed the 300 mark early in the year and now stands at about 312 units – taking joint memberships into account, that's well over 400 people. Our thanks are due to all those who had contributed to this rise in membership over this period, particularly Ruth Angus who will be taking some time off after 6 years responsibility for publicity. Dot has also signalled her intention to "retire" at the next AGM. A sub-group of the Committee, led by Colin Wilson, has been formed to handle all aspects of membership and publicity.

The Committee has also set up an Editorial Board to manage the records database and produce the report. This is chaired by Ken Moore and includes our records database manager, Marek Walford, and Derek Barker. Production of the 2006/ 7 report is well advanced, work has started on 2008 and will begin shortly on 2009.

Ray Reedman organised a typically full and varied programme of evening meetings which had attendances at much the same levels as recent years. We had some problems with the University's facilities last year, so we again looked for alternative venues, but so far have been unable to come up with anything of comparable quality and accessibility in the central Berkshire area.

We had a busy season of mid-week walks, Sunday trips and weekend visits; with perhaps the highlights being the Norfolk weekend in February which managed an impressive combined group list of 140 species, and the Dungeness visit which provided Glossy Ibis, Great White Egret and White-rumped Sandpiper. This year is just as full, with several new venues and trips to Spain in April and August, led by Ken White.

In the field, the last three years have been dominated by work on the national and county atlas. Hundreds of observers have contributed to the database of around a quarter of a million records for Berkshire so far. A preview of the results will be given to the Club in March 2011. We are just entering the last year of recording and will now be focussing on filling the gaps in the data.

The Club's conservation activities in the year included working with Reading Borough Council on the conversion of Fobney Island into a wetland reserve, investigating ways to enhance the protection of the lower Kennet valley and discussions with the National Trust at Basildon Park on surveying and possible conservation projects. The Conservation Fund made a grant of £1,000 towards work at Hosehill Lake to improve the reed-beds as bittern habitat. With public sector effort on conservation inevitably being scaled down as expenditure cuts bite, I anticipate that the protection of the natural environment is going to depend increasingly on voluntary bodies like the BOC.

Finally, let me thank the many people whose support, enthusiasm and hard work, in the field and indoors, have contributed to the BOC's continuing growth in scope, scale and influence.

Renton Righelato, November 2010