

SOC Clyde Branch Annual General Meeting, Monday 8th April 2024

MINUTES

The SOC Clyde Branch AGM was held as an in-person meeting at the Renfield Centre. Forty persons were present.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from John Simpson.

2. Minutes of previous AGM

The minutes of the previous AGM had been available on the SOC and on the Birds in Clyde website for some time. There were no comments made regarding these and no matters arising.

3. Office Bearers' Reports

3.1 Chairperson's Report

Zul Bhatia presented the Chairperson's report. This is attached as Appendix 1.

3.2 Secretary's Report

Ian Fulton presented the Secretary's report. This is attached as Appendix 2.

3.3 Treasurer's Report

An unaudited summary of the accounts was provided by Liz Parsons.

3.4 Recorder's Report

In John Simpson's absence, Zul Bhatia presented the Recorder's report. This is attached as Appendix 3.

3.5 Outings Organiser's Report

Ania Owsianka presented the Outings Organiser's report. This is attached as Appendix 4.

4. Election of Office Bearers

A notice had been published by the Secretary via the HQ Mailchimp email and the Clyde Branch Grapevine inviting nominations and volunteers to fill the Office Bearer positions. There had been no responses received to this invitation.

Therefore, your committee would like to propose that the following office bearers be elected

Chairperson – Zul Bhatia

Treasurer – Liz Parsons

Secretary – Rebecca Dickson

Branch Representative on SOC Council – Zul Bhatia

This was approved by the meeting.

5. Election of Committee Members

A notice had been published by the Secretary via the HQ Mailchimp email and the Clyde Branch Grapevine inviting nominations and volunteers to join the branch committee. There had been no responses received to this invitation.

Therefore, your committee would like to propose that the following persons be elected as Committee Members

Toby Wilson, David Palmar, Sandy McNeil, Fiona McLean, Kevin Sinclair, Andrew Russell, Donald Wilson, Emma Anderson, Kevin McCormick, John Simpson, and John Sweeney.

This was approved by the meeting.

6. Evening meetings

The average attendance this season had improved to pre-Covid stats, the numbers were highest in January and February where both talks had 48 attendees. This is an increase from an average of 30 attendees last year.

We are now charging a £4 admission fee, which seems to be working well in allowing us to cover the room hire. Zul has started bringing in books from HQ for any donations above £1, if anyone would like to donate books for this purpose, please let me know.

Glasgow City Council have released that they were considering putting paid parking restrictions until 10am, this has now been put on hold due to the backlash received. Ongoing discussions have been carried out both after in person talks and within the committee for other potential venues in Partick and Clarkston. We agreed to move the meetings to Partick Burgh Hall for the new season of evening meetings from Autumn 2024.

7. Any other business

There being no other business, Rebecca Dickson thanked all for attending and closed the meeting.

Minutes prepared by Rebecca Dickson, Secretary, SOC Clyde Branch

Appendix 1

Chairperson's report for 2023/2024

I have now been in post for just over six years as Chair and I have continued to work closely with our Clyde Branch Committee. The branch continued to input to the running of the SOC nationally with myself on Council and helping with the SOC/BTO programme of monthly events for young people. **Fiona McLean's** tenure on the Management Committee came to an end after five years. With the exception of Donald Wilson whose other commitments and shift working have meant he is coming off the committee, all the existing members have expressed a willingness to continue for another year.

The monthly Face to Face evening meetings continued. One of them was a joint one with the RSPB Glasgow Group. Our Branch Secretary, **Rebecca Dickson's** report gives more details. Our three Committee meetings held in 2023/24 continued to be held on Zoom.

Outings continued to be very popular. In a slight departure from normal, we had an extra outing targeting particular species, in this case Bearded Tit and Hawfinch. This proved very popular. Two of our outings were joint ones with other groups. We welcomed a new Outings Organiser, **Ania Owsianka** but our previous one, **David Palmar**, continues to be involved in a lesser role. Their report produced for the AGM gives more details of the outings. **Donald Wilson** and **Sandy McNeil** have also contributed greatly to the programme.

We continued to promote **Recording and Reporting** birds and it was very pleasing to see increasing number of people reporting birds regularly. In 2023, BirdTrack received 182,355 records (up by 17.5% on the previous year). The Recorder team led by **John Simpson** included **Val Wilson** and **John Sweeney** was quite active as will be seen from their report.

The popular **Daily Grapevine** (now going in some form or other for over 30 years) and the **WhatsApp** group for instant sightings and managed by **Val Wilson** continues to be offered to SOC members.

Fieldwork is a very significant activity for many of our members and as usual, a lot was carried out. A list of all the active projects known to us in the Clyde is available via our branch website.

Social media: **Andrew Russell** who leads for us on Twitter has done an excellent job in keeping a high profile for @Clydebirding. We now have 1,210 followers. Unfortunately, due to changes brought about by Twitter / X, the popular feed that appears on our branch website Home page cannot be seen by people who haven't registered with Twitter / X. We continued to have excellent relations with the Clydebirds Facebook page. The site owner, **John Molloy**, was very happy for us to use the site to promote the Clyde SOC's activities. This is much appreciated.

Clyde Bird Reports: No bird reports were produced during the year, but the 2011 one is nearly complete, and the Recorder Team are well advanced with the 2022 one. A plan has been drawn up to fill the gaps for the missing years (2009 and 2012-2021).

Branch website: Our Webmaster, **Kevin McCormick** continues to do a fantastic job for us in ensuring that our Branch website continues to be well used. Page views have increased c.25% (last 12 months vs previous 12 months) and site users shows a similar rise. A

significant number of people visit our site via search engines, particularly Google. Twitter/X is also a good site driving people to look at our website. The Recent sightings page and the Outings page continue to be main pages that our users check most days. The Talks page is more popular this year and may have driven up attendances at the evening meetings. Pages that were particularly popular included the Big Birding Day, Glasgow Peregrine project, the Tay Reed Beds outing report and the 'What to look out for in February'. A particularly welcome addition to the website was a Clyde-customised version of the Online Scottish Bird Report.

Venue for indoor meetings: All our Face-to-Face meetings in the last 12 months were held at Renfield St Stephens Centre on Bath Street and this proved to be an excellent venue. With increased numbers attending, we were often able to cover the costs of the room hire, but we will look at alternatives for next season too.

Events: The **Clyde Big Birding Day** was held on 13th May 2023 as part of the Global event. 133 species of birds was recorded that day by 62 people (up 24% on the previous year) and 2,625 records submitted to BirdTrack that day (up 53%).

John Simpson led the **Glasgow Peregrine Project** on behalf of the SOC and several of us were involved in talking to the public.

Clyde Atlas: No significant progress was made during the year on either the 1985-91 or the 2011-2017 tetrad atlases for which data had been collected. Hopefully, we will be able to move forward on this in the coming year, but it needs a great deal of input.

SOC Clyde Discussion Group: Some members of the group have been collecting / collating records of our eight focal species (Cuckoo, Goosander, Kingfisher, Nuthatch, Raven, Rook, Tree Sparrow and Yellowhammer) but otherwise the group has not met as a whole but will do so soon to move forward. One of our members, **Tony Hall** has done a great job in identifying those areas which are data deficient, and we will use that information to target places for not only collecting bird records but also for mentoring.

THE FUTURE

Monthly outings will continue to feature significantly in our programme. Apart from the wildlife we see, they are an excellent resource for some informal mentoring.

Continue with **monthly face to face meetings** in the September to April period but look for alternative (cheaper) venue.

Consider having the occasional **joint meeting / outing** with partners.

We will continue to support and be involved with the club-wide Zoom meetings organised by HQ and will hold some online meetings ourselves (e.g. committee meetings).

Continue to promote the study, enjoyment and conservation of wild birds and their habitats across the Clyde area making use of the considerable bird data we hold. Encourage more recording and reporting of birds and other wildlife.

Make more progress on making better use of the data we hold.

A volunteer has agreed to try and draw up a brief status guide for all the birds ever recorded in the Clyde. Facilitate this by providing relevant data.

Develop the **Discussion Group** further including having an informal mentoring scheme and 'impromptu outings' by facilitating people to meet each other for bird watching. Improving

the bird data collected by 'citizen science' schemes (notably BirdTrack) would probably be best done via this group.

Consider running another Clyde Big Birding Day in May 2024 and using this for mentoring too.

Develop the links with University of Glasgow to make better use of our bird data by producing relevant visualisations using GIS tools.

Liaise further with other organisations active in Clyde to input into management of sites important for birds as well as improved monitoring.

Acknowledgements

Many people's contributions have already been acknowledged in the relevant section above, but for the branch to operate as successfully as it has, there are so many more people involved. I would particularly like to thank **Rebecca Dickson** who has taken on the Secretary's role, **Ania Owsianka** who has become our Outings Organiser, **Hannah Mathers** from University of Glasgow and **Kevin McCormick** who almost single-handedly managed the website. A big thank you to **Donald Wilson** who has been a big force in our branch in recent years with his ideas and enthusiasm. Although he is coming off the committee, he will continue to be involved in relevant branch activities in a big way (especially outings). Thank you to all of you who have supported the Clyde Branch in one way or another this year. If you have any feedback or suggestions, please let me or any of the Committee members have them.

Zul Bhatia

Chair, Clyde Branch of the SOC

April 2023

Appendix 2

Secretary's Report

Clyde Branch membership now stands at 391 memberships or 454 persons (counting joint memberships as two persons). This is just over a 5% increase from the previous year's total of 429.

The distribution list for the daily Clyde Grapevine news message now stands at 265. Many thanks to Val Wilson and the team for all their efforts in maintaining such a high standard of service.

Our new email system called EmailOctopus is operating well after some initial authentication issues in 2023 which were causing messages to be blocked as junk. Only a few incidences of emails being sent to directly to spam have occurred. Many thanks to Kevin McCormick and SOC HQ for all their help with this last year.

Our website *birdsinclyde.scot* continues to be a great success. SOC members have told me to praise the resources and information available. This year the website team (a sub-group within the committee) has not met up much however as always Kevin McCormick our webmaster has been fantastic throughout.

The website is showing increased traffic with the most visited pages being recent sightings and outings. Further information is provided by Zul in the chairperson's report. The most exciting new addition is a page on the Glasgow Peregrine Project launched last week.

The WhatsApp group called 'Clyde SOC Bird News' has been well used. This now has a count of 144 participants and is continuing to be a popular way of reporting sightings.

Other social media pages are as follows:

- the Facebook 'Clydebirds' group administered by Clyde SOC member John Molloy now has 1086 members, up from 990 last year.
- the Facebook 'Baron's Haugh Wildlife Sightings' group administered by Jason Newton now has 1593 members, up from 1163 last year.
- a Twitter account '@clydebirding' managed by the Clyde SOC member Andrew Russell now has 1210 followers, up from 949 last year.

There has been a significant increase in regular attendance this year. The average attendance this season had improved to pre-Covid stats, the numbers were highest in January and February where both talks had 48 attendees. This is an increase from an average of 30 attendees last year.

Due to the high costs for the current venue at the Renfield Centre, Bath Street, the entry charge for in person talks were increased to £4 (£2 for students). This additional charge was openly discussed at meetings where attendees were asked to vote. This has resulted in room costs being met on most, if not all occasions.

There has also been a notable increase of university students attending. Largely thanks to John Simpson's project at Glasgow University. It is hoped that a strong relationship will continue to grow between the students and the SOC, which will link into SOC youth connect as well.

I would like to also thank John, and everyone involved for their efforts on the Glasgow Peregrine Project. Within a short period of time, the number of new requests or questions I am being asked has rapidly increased from Glasgow University students including their Zoological Society, I believe this project is making a huge impact and I am very excited to see what this year brings.

The in-person meetings which were held over the winter were:

- September: 'South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project' by Phillip Munro
- October: 'Isle of May Storm Petrels and recent seabird discoveries' by Mark Newell
- December: 'Warblers in Scotland and beyond' by Stan Da Prato
- January: 'Developing watchpoint's for the Clyde's most iconic species' by John Simpson
- February: 'Peregrine's, Pit tags, Papers' by George Smith
- March: 'Workshop: Getting started birdwatching' by Dave Clugston
- April: 'Clyde Ringing Group Update' by Iain Livingstone

The online Zoom meetings organised by HQ were:

- September: 'My time with Golden Eagles' by Laurie Campbell
- October: 'Bringing species back from the brink: Capercaillie and Corn Bunting case studies' by Allan Perkins, Carolyn Robertson, and Alex Bell
- November: 'A weekend of insights into the acoustic world of birds' Club-wide online talks programme by various speakers
- December: 'Lead from ammunition – a toxic problem affecting birds and other animals' by Prof. Debbie Pain
- January: 'The Great Auk' by Prof. Neil Metcalfe
- February: 'Tracking bird's movements' by Ros Green, Claudia Tapia Harris & Jethro Gauld
- March: 'Avian Flu' by Dr Phil Atkinson, Dr Jude Lane & NatureScot
- April: 'SOC Endowment Fund Projects' by Helen Aiton & Michal Jezierski

In the past, Ian Fulton gave presentations on recent sightings in the Clyde area illustrated with some of the many excellent photographs taken in the area. It has been agreed that Andrew Russell is to support Ian with this in the future, to allow Ian to take a step back as gathering such data can be time consuming.

Rebecca Dickson – Secretary, Clyde Branch SOC

Appendix 3

Recorder's Report

1. The Local Recording team consists of John Simpson Local Recorder, Assistant Recorders Val Wilson and John Sweeney. Zul Bhatia is quite involved too.
2. The Clyde Bird Records Panel met in November 2023, the first meeting in over a decade and the guidance on rare bird reporting was reviewed. The branch website has been updated to reflect the new position. Two members retired and were replaced by John Molloy and Andrew Russell.
3. The draft 2022 bird report is well advanced. By kind permission of his family, this and future reports will have illustration(s) by Tommy Daniels.
4. Glasgow Peregrine Project is now backed by nest cameras and watches are due to start at the end of April.
5. To back the data team, the field team made up of members of the SOC and Central Scotland Raptor Study Group have been active now throughout the winter and spring.
6. Talks to eight groups about the work of the branch have been delivered to RSPB, SWT and Argyll Bird Club.
7. Ardmore Point Study Site has commenced with the help of various individuals and groups, most notably the Clyde Ringing Group. Dedicated web page to follow.
8. Please record pairs, territories, and productivity, i.e. broods and fledged birds from your sites for the bird report. Please enter data into BirdTrack if you can, if not I will accept them in Excel etc.

John Simpson,
Clyde Area Local Recorder,
April 2024.

Appendix 4

Outings Report 2023/2024

A full programme of outings – one a month – has taken place during 2023 and the first part of 2024, with outings planned until June 2024. We aim to always have the next three outings on the branch website (birdsinclyde.scot).

David Palmar will continue to update the outings page on the branch website (birdsinclyde.scot), but Ania Owsianka has agreed to take over as outings organiser. David would like to thank her for making the transition so easy.

David would like to thank all who have helped him and to Zul in particular for his good ideas and fantastic support during his tenure as outings organiser.

2023 / 24

April 29th 2023– Cashel, East Loch Lomond

May 6th – Baron’s Haugh

June 17th – Culter Glen, South Lanarkshire

July 22nd – Newshot Island

August 20th - Ardmore and Garelochhead

September 9th – Kinneil and Bothkennar Pools (joint with Central Scotland SOC branch)

October 15th - Lothian Coast

November 11th – Musselburgh

November 30th - Tay Reedbeds - an extra outing

December 16th– Hogganfield

January 13th 2024 – Lochwinnoch (joint with Lochwinnoch Force for Nature)

February 24th - Drumpellier Country Park

March 16th – Ardmore Point

The average number of participants per outing was 20, and the total number of participants was 137.

The most popular was Cashel with 34, closely followed by Lochwinnoch (33) and Ardmore & Garelochhead (32). Over the course of the year, 65 people joined an outing for the first time, but most of them have not yet come a second time.

Planned for next few months of 2024:

April 21st - RSPB Black Devon Wetlands and RSPB Skinflats

April 27th Salloch, East Loch Lomond

May 15th - East Lothian Coast

May 30th - Isle of May

June 22nd - Great Cumbrae

Leaders

Thanks go to everyone who has led or has volunteered to lead an outing. Without leaders, it would not be possible to implement such a varied and interesting programme.

Allan Russell
Donald Wilson
Lang Stewart
Eddie Williams
Ian Fulton

Marco McGinty
Jim Coyle
Sandy McNeil
Scott Black
Zul Bhatia

David Clugston
Peter McGeough
Billy Thomson
John Simpson
Toby Wilson

David Palmar / Ania Owsianka

April 2024