

SOC Clyde Branch Annual General Meeting, Monday 25th April 2022

MINUTES

The branch AGM was held as an online Zoom video conference. Twenty branch members were present online. The meeting was Zoom hosted by Ian Fulton.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from committee members Fiona McLean, Donald Wilson, and Kevin Sinclair.

2. Minutes of previous AGM

The minutes of the previous AGM had been available on the SOC and the BirdsinClyde websites 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 Excursions Convenor's report

David Palmar presented the Excursion Convenor's report. This is attached as Appendix 3.

3.4 Treasurer's Report

Liz Parsons presented an interim unaudited summary of the accounts. It was noted that some of the balance in the account is restricted for expenditure. The final version will be issued later.

4. Election of Office Bearers

A notice had been published by the Secretary to all Clyde Branch members inviting nominations and volunteers to fill the office bearer's 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 – Ian Fulton

Branch Representative on SOC Council – Zul Bhatia

This was approved without comment by the meeting.

5. Election of Committee Members

A notice had been published by the Secretary to all Clyde Branch members 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, Iain Gibson, David Palmar, Sandy McNeil, Fiona McLean, Kevin Sinclair, Andrew Russell, Donald Wilson, Emma Anderson and Rebecca Dickson.

This was approved without comment by the meeting.

6. Any other business

A branch member had requested that the issue of car parking at Salloch Bay, East Loch Lomond, should be pursued by the SOC Clyde Branch. For those unfamiliar with the situation, the car park is accessible only for pre-booked campers from 1st April to 31st October. Day visitors are not permitted access.

In fact, one of our branch members had already had a lengthy correspondence with Forestry & Land Scotland who own the site. He even got his MSP to take up the case on his behalf. Unfortunately, Forestry & Land would not budge on the issue. This would appear to be a first step towards restricting car access on East Loch Lomond and introducing some sort of bus service between Balmaha and Rowardennan.

Part of the response from Forestry & Land Scotland is -

"We apologise for any inconvenience that the management decision, that Salloch Campsite parking will be open only to registered campers only from 1st April 2022 to 31st October 2022 may cause you, but we believe it will benefit the long term visitor management of this popular location

Please note that we are also currently working with the National Park partners in the East Loch Lomond Visitor Management Group to develop sustainable public transport options, with a pilot project that was hoped to be in place for 2022, but this is likely to be delayed. Having Salloch as a non-car destination is considered a motivator to get people to take up the sustainable transport option as this project develops.

We understand that these current alternative parking options may not be accessible for those with mobility issues, but we are hoping this is a temporary issue and more travel options will be available soon."

One would have thought that the 'public transport option' would have been put in place BEFORE the car park was restricted but perhaps that is being too sensible!

Ian Fulton thanked all for attending and closed the meeting.

Minutes prepared by Ian Fulton, Secretary, SOC Clyde Branch
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Appendix 1

SOC Clyde Branch Chairperson's report for 2021/2022

I have now been in post for just over four years as Chair and I have continued to work closely with our Clyde Branch Committee. The branch continued to input in to the running of the SOC nationally with **Fiona McLean** on the Management Committee and myself on Council. I am also involved with the SOC/BTO programme of monthly events for young people and also helping to organise the Branches Conference to be held in May 2022.

The Covid-19 Pandemic continued to have a significant impact on many of our activities with all evening meetings and Committee meetings held on Zoom. We continued to share the evening meetings jointly with the Central branch and they were well-attended. Our Branch Secretary, **Ian Fulton**'s report gives more details.

It was particularly pleasing to see Clyde branch topping the 'league table' of new SOC members in the February 2022 report. Normally, it is Lothian (the largest branch). Ian Fulton's report gives details of membership of the Clyde branch of the SOC.

We were able to restart our **Outings** in autumn 2021 and so far 59 different people have attended and we have recorded 95 species on them. **David Palmar**, our Excursions Convenor has produced a report for the AGM with more details. **Donald Wilson** has 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 regularly. For the first time, records reported via BirdTrack topped 100,000 in a year. Our Assistant Recorder, **Val Wilson** continued to do an excellent job in having an overview of records submitted to BirdTrack, adding many records received directly to the SOC database of birds recorded in the Clyde, producing the daily Grapevine, etc.

Fieldwork is a very significant activity for many of our members. Activities undertaken include Breeding Bird Surveys, BTO Garden Birdwatch, Heronries Census, Nesting Neighbours / Nest Record Scheme, WeBS, Big Garden Birdwatch, Goose monitoring, International Swan Census and the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme. Some members were also leading / volunteering with the nest box projects at various sites via the Friends of Glasgow's LNRs and at Linn Park. Private projects (sometimes extending beyond the Clyde area) included winter gull monitoring in some of Glasgow's parks. Lesser Whitethroat habitat restoration and post-moult Eider counts in the Firth of Clyde.

As usual, the **Clyde Ringing Group** continued to be very active and their latest report (available on our branch website) shows that they ringed 12,758 new birds of 118 species in 2020. A particularly important milestone was that they ringed their 1000th Jack Snipe!

Andrew Russell who leads for us on Twitter has done an excellent job in keeping a high profile for @Clydebirding and we now have 696 followers. A particularly good benefit of the Twitter account is that it feeds directly in to the branch website, so visitors there can see what wildlife has been seen in the Clyde area.

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.

The whole Clyde branch Committee met twice online in the last year with sub-committees meeting at other times. Some of the various activities we have been involved in over the last year are outlined below.

SOC Database / Clyde Bird Reports

Volunteers continued to convert records received in Word format for past years in to Excel for uploading to the SOC database. We now have 841,548 records in there We started clearing the backlog of 'missing' Clyde Bird Reports. With the Local Recorder **Iain Gibson** concentrating on getting the 2009 Clyde Bird Report done, a team of us got together and worked on the 2010 one. No less than 14 people shared the task of writing the species accounts (some for the first time ever) and an additional three people took an overview of it all. Many other people helped in smaller ways and the report was finally launched in February 2022. Following a meeting where the Committee met with the SOC's Birding and Science Officer, **Mark Lewis**, we have started working on the 2011 report whilst we gather all the data for 2020 which we will tackle after the 2011 one.

Branch website

After a small group of us working away for some months, the branch website was finally launched in January 2022. The site had nearly 400 users on its first day and across the first five days the stats suggest the site attracted over 750 users in total. It has now settled down to low double figures of users most days except when there is an SOC email or social media promotion pointing users towards something new on the website. The highest count was when we launched the 2010 Clyde Bird Report (free download). The website is a fantastic resource for showcasing the branch with information about all our activities, a repository for articles and publications, etc. We have received many compliments and I know it has also resulted in a higher profile for us and some new members too.

New Venue for indoor meetings

Due to all our meetings being online for the foreseeable future, our move to Renfield St Stephens Centre on Bath Street is on hold for now.

Clyde Big Birding Day

As our contribution to the Global Birding Day on **14th May 2022**, we have organised our very own. The first of its kind, which may become annual? We would love to see great participation and have a record number of birds reported that day. Full details are on the branch website. **Please do take part.**

Atlas / SOC App

Although a few preliminary maps were produced from the Tetrad data collected for the 2011-2017 BTO Atlas, these are very much work in progress and not ready for sharing. This is vast task to take on and on the 'back burner' for now. The App continues to flourish and it's on track to hit 1 million downloads later this year. Ian Fulton continued to get people to write up accounts and a few new sites for the Clyde were added.

SOC Youth Connect

This is an initiative (launched in 2018) to look at how we can integrate and welcome more young people in to the SOC. It mainly operates via the private Facebook page (with 48 members) but I have

to be honest and say that it hasn't really 'taken off', although in co-operation with the BTO we are holding monthly events for people under 30.

Crops for Wildlife

We have been talking about this for some time, but unfortunately continue to find it difficult to find a suitable location for this, so little progress has been made.

Boxes for Barnies project

Unfortunately, despite putting up 19 new boxes for Barn Owls in the Lochwinnoch area in the previous year, only one was occupied (fledging two young). It was a very poor year for Barn Owls generally and we are hoping for greater success in 2022. I have kept in touch with all the box recipients and have now become the Barn Owl co-ordinator for the South Strathclyde Raptor Study Group.

SOC Discussion Group

Due to pressure of other commitments by various people, this didn't get very far and we will revisit in the future.

The Future

Unfortunately, the uncertainty surrounding Covid-19 restrictions make it difficult to plan with absolute certainty but it is currently assumed that the rest of the meetings until at least September 2022 will be online. We really look forward to seeing each other face to face at meetings after then, but in the meantime have to make do with seeing each other at outings. Due to the success of the online meetings attracting people who otherwise would not have attended a physical meeting, we will be looking at how we can continue to benefit from the online presence.

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 using the 2007-2011 Atlas data. Revisit the idea of a Discussion Group. Consider a mentoring scheme similar to the one that Lothian branch has carried out. Two meetings coming up should help with these aspects of our work – the Branches Conference in May and the Local Recorder's meeting (Organised by the SOC's Birding and Science Officer) later in the year.

Challenges still remain, of course. Little further progress has been made with developing Paisley Moss LNR as a reserve in co-operation with Glasgow Airport. No contact has been made with Scottish Wildlife Trust over the management of Cathkin Marsh. I haven't been personally involved in either of these two issues myself, so far and unfortunately, the lead people haven't been available.

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. 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 2022

Appendix 2

Secretary's Report

Clyde Branch membership now stands at 364 memberships or 420 persons, counting joint memberships as two persons. This includes 15 Student and 3 Junior members. In the last year (since 26/4/21) the branch has had 50 new members, many saying they have heard of the club via your social media platforms. In the same period there have been 22 cancellations, mostly lapsed memberships.

The distribution list for the daily Clyde Grapevine news message now stands at 260. Again, many thanks to Val Wilson for all her efforts in maintaining such a high standard of service and for her enduring patience with contributors. On a very few occasions Ian Fulton has deputised for Val, hopefully you did not spot the difference!.

Social media continues to become an increasingly popular medium for information sharing and recording.

For Clyde SOC members we have a 'WhatsApp' group called 'Clyde SOC Bird News'. Val Wilson is the administrator of this group. This now has a count of 95 subscribers and is proving to be interesting and a popular way of reporting sightings when out in the field. Reports will be picked up from here for the daily Grapevine and for the Clyde database.

Other social media initiatives which are public rather than SOC specific are

- the Facebook 'Clydebirds' group administered by Clyde SOC member John Molloy. This group now has 928 members.
- the Facebook 'Baron's Haugh Wildlife Sightings' which was set up to replace the website which the late Jimmy Maxwell maintained for many years. This group now has 849 members.
- a Twitter account '@clydebirding' was set up in October 2020 and is managed by Clyde SOC member Andrew Russell

Andrew has provided some statistics for the Twitter account.

"Twitter follower count- 696 (as of 7pm, 24/04/22)

190 new followers since January 1 2022.

372 new followers since April 2021.

The average monthly twitter impressions over the past 12 months is 41.8 thousand, this is the monthly combined 'views' of tweets and retweets but also shows the reach of twitter as a way of advertising birding in the Clyde area.

The monthly 'top tweet' is almost always news about a local rarity eg Woodchat Shrike, Golden Oriole, Quail, Pectoral Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull, Ring-necked Duck and Lesser Scaup since last April. The only time a rare bird wasn't the most popular tweet was when I made a tweet in December about disturbance at Balmore Pool and asking birders to make sure they are not disturbing birds."

Please note that sighting reports shared on Facebook and on Twitter are not picked up for the Grapevine or the Clyde database.

Our winter indoor meetings programme for the 2021-2022 season was again affected by the Covid-19 restrictions. All our usual face-to-face meetings were replaced by online virtual Zoom meetings for which we were twinned with the SOC Central Branch.

This being our second season of Zoom meetings, we were a bit more relaxed with the best procedures and behaviour protocols. The meetings were attended by about 70 people from Clyde and Central Branches. Some of the attendees, such as Bute and Arran residents, were people who would never have made the journey to Glasgow on a winter's night for a physical meeting.

We hope to return to face-to-face meetings for next winter's programme. It is probable that we will continue to use Zoom for some of our administrative meetings like branch committee meetings.

The meetings which were held over the winter were

- September : 'Warblers and Migrants' by Stan da Prato
- October : 'Ecology and Conservation of Urban Birds' by Davide Dominoni
- November : 'South of Scotland Golden Eagles Project' by Rick Taylor
- December : 'Charmed by birds : a life enhanced' by Rick Goater
- January : 'Palearctic African songbird migration' by Will Cresswell
- February : 'To catch a flycatcher' by Mark Wilson
- March : 'Cranes breeding in Scotland' by Hywel Maggs
- April : 'Why do birds suddenly disappear?' by Lev Parikian

At all of these meetings, Ian Fulton gave a presentation of recent sightings in the Clyde area illustrated with some of the many excellent photographs taken in the area. We hope that you find this to be of interest.

Ian Fulton – Secretary, SOC Clyde Branch

Appendix 3

Excursions Convenor's Report

SOC Clyde Outings Report for 2022 AGM

We were able to resume outings in autumn 2021.

Outings are an important aspect of the SOC's activities, and many members look forward to and participate in them. Outings are a great opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals whilst bettering your bird ID skills. There'll always be someone on hand to help with the trickier aspects of field identification so all levels of birdwatcher are welcome.

Outings this session were:

October 2021 - Ardmore, led by Sandy McNeil

November - Hogganfield and Frankfield Lochs, led by Donald Wilson

December - Castle Semple Loch and RSPB Lochwinnoch, led by Zul Bhatia

January 2022 - North Ayrshire Coast, led by Marco McGinty

February - Drumpellier Country Park, led by Donald Wilson

March - Baron's Haugh, led by Lang Stewart

See the following link for reports from all the outings this year so far:

<https://www.birdsinclde.scot/outings.html>

The rest of the programme includes two outings to Loch Lomond - to Inchcailloch on 27th April, led by Ian Fulton, and to Inversnaid, Loch Arklet and Loch Katrine on 1st May, led by Donald Wilson and Sandy McNeil. Full details are on the Outings page as above.

In the summer we're planning to visit Newshot Island, led by Allan Russell.

The rest of the programme is being arranged, and will be publicised on the Birds in Clyde website when it is finalised.

David Palmar