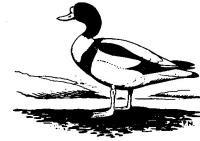




CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2006-2007



TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB
Registered Charity No 508850

I really can't believe that another year has passed, my third as your Chairman, but what a year it has been. We are going from strength to strength due to the sheer number of members now actively involved in the day-to-day business of the Club, which helps to promote our image and standing and forge better links with other bodies. Many of the targets of our Five-Year Plan have already been reached and it may be that we will have to raise the bar on some of these to make them even more challenging. The following facts and figures demonstrate just how successful we have been:

- **Membership:** This has increased dramatically and now stands at 317 at the end of 2006. It is still rising and may well reach 330 by the April 2007 AGM. Membership was only 231 at the end of 2001 and, since then, has risen by nearly a third. We are well on course to achieve our target of 350 by 2009. This seemed such a challenging target 3 years ago but is now becoming a reality with still over 2 years to go. New members are now made more welcome and I am indebted to Vice-Chairman, John Fletcher, who so freely gives up his time to show many of them around some of the best local birding sites. This undoubtedly helps us to retain people we might otherwise lose after a few years.
- **Attendance at Evening Meetings:** Prior to the launch of the Five-Year Plan in April 2004, attendance at evening meetings was pitifully low, with an average of only 39 between 2001-2003. During this period, only 2 meetings exceeded 50 members. Since 2003, attendance has risen to an average of 49 (an increase of 26%), with attendance at 12 meetings exceeding 50 and 2 even reaching 67; the most we have ever had in many decades. This success almost certainly stems from the wider and more interesting range of talks, including some very successful 'non-bird' evenings, which were extremely well attended, and made possible through our purchase of a digital projector. This was a key issue arising out of the Questionnaire Survey, to which the Committee has responded, and our target of 70 members per meeting is not far away.
- **Venue for Evening Meetings:** Since the Questionnaire Survey, when many members raised the choice of venue as a key issue for non-attendance, the Committee has been looking for a new location that fully meets our requirements for comfortable, functional accommodation coupled with safe, secure car parking. I am delighted that we have now secured the Lecture Room at Stockton Library on the first Monday of each month from September 2007 and hope that this change will increase attendance even more. I am aware that this may not suit everyone, for which I apologise, but the Committee feels that the time is now right for a move.
- **Application Form:** The new Application Form has now been printed and placed in various locations, such as visitor centres and hides, and is already paying dividends. It has generated a significant number of new members. I would like to thank Julie Mason for her excellent work in designing the form.
- **Sponsorship:** We have been incredibly successful over the past year in raising funds for the Club, both through the traditional sponsored bird watch on Greenabella Marsh, kindly organised by Tony Marron and funded by Huntsman Tioxide, and through an active sponsorship drive to raise money for the publication of our Breeding Bird Atlas (due out in December 2007). I would like to extend my thanks to all the external corporate sponsors and our members, who have been so generous. The 'Sponsor a Species' drive alone has 'sold' 101 species to date and raised £2,520.

Fieldwork on the Breeding Bird Atlas was completed in the summer of 2006 and work has now started in earnest on the production of the maps, the writing of the species accounts and resolving issues related to publication, such as maps, photographs, the front cover and formatting. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Atlas Project Team, chaired by Graeme Joynt, for the huge amount of work it has put in during the past year. This is, without doubt, the biggest project ever undertaken by the Club.

The Club has continued to nurture existing and forge new links with outside bodies, either through direct approaches or by commenting on key strategies and plans that affect our region. We have, for example, developed cordial relationships with the Forestry Commission (through the Guisborough Forest Plan), the four Local Councils, North York Moors National Park Authority, INCA and the Environment Agency, most of whom are major sponsors of the Breeding Bird Atlas. We have also worked closely with Cleveland Police to produce the first ever guidelines for reporting wildlife crime.

I am keen to see the Hartlepool Observatory project realised and I am indebted to Ali McLee who has prepared and submitted two bids for the funding of the Feasibility Study: one to the Heritage Lottery Fund and one to the Northern Rock Foundation. Should either of these bids be successful, we will be able to progress the Study to determine the project viability and costs and have outline plans prepared by our selected architectural consultants, Jane Darbyshire and David Kendall Limited.

The Conservation Sub Committee and Reclamation Pond Working Party have devoted a lot of time this year to keeping abreast developments on the Reclamation Pond. A number of meetings and discussions have been held with Impetus Waste Management, the potential developers and the RSPB. The situation appears that the site may be under imminent threat. I would like to assure members that we will do all we can to ensure as positive an outcome as possible, including safeguarding continued TBC access to Dormans Pool and the Reclamation Pond.

Members have been actively involved in local, regional and national survey work during the past year, including the monthly WeBS counts, the Breeding Bird Survey and our own winter survey of water bodies in Cleveland. Through sheer goodwill, the latter has involved over 95% coverage and is producing some extremely interesting results for certain species. The survey work for the Breeding Bird Survey has been nothing short of sensational, with over 4,500 survey hours being put in during the 8-year period from 1999-2006. I would like to thank all those who gave their time so generously. The '*Cleveland Bird Report*' for 2005 was produced on time and its new binding has vastly improved both its appearance and quality. My sincere thanks go to the Records Sub Committee, ably chaired by our County Recorder, Richard Taylor, and the report's editor, Graeme Joynt. I know personally how much work goes into its production and I urge all members to send in their records to produce an accurate report as possible.

Local outings have been held during the year to the Leven Valley, North Tees Marshes, Guisborough Forest, Seal Sands and Hemlington Lake. These have generally been well attended and it is intended to continue them for the foreseeable future, unless demand drops off. They are ideal for new members or those who don't have a detailed knowledge of birds and would like to learn more but anyone is more than welcome, including non-members.

I am delighted that the Committee unanimously decided to award Tony Marron an Honorary Life Membership in recognition of his long-standing support of the Club through his employment with Huntsman Tioxide. Tony has been responsible for the annual sponsored birdwatch on Greenabella Marsh, which has raised much-needed income for the Club over many years. A framed certificate is to be awarded to Tony at our April 2007 AGM.

I would like to end my report with some heartfelt thankyou's to those without whose hard work our achievements would not have been possible. My sincere thanks are due to Vice-Chairman, John Fletcher, who also doubles as a very successful Sales and Publicity Officer; our Honorary Secretary, Chris Sharp, who works tirelessly and often unnoticed behind the scenes on the administration of the Club; and Mark Askew, our Honorary Treasurer, who keeps an excellent rein on our financial affairs. I would also like to thank the Chairs and members of the three Sub Committees, who are responsible for the day-to-day, 'nitty-gritty' work of the Club; and our representatives on external bodies, namely Vic Fairbrother, John Sharp and Russ McAndrew (TVWT Biodiversity Group), Derek Clayton (RSPB Saltholme), Martin Blick (Scaling Dam Wildlife Advisory Committee), Ali McLee (Durham Bird Club's Projects and Surveys Committee) and Graham Megson (Tees Valley Biodiversity Group). I also offer my thanks to Eric James, who retires from the Committee after a four-year stint, during which time his advice and input were greatly valued, and Jamie Duffie who has greatly improved our Website and keeps it regularly updated. There is little doubt that our excellent Website helps to attract new members. Finally, I would like to thank you, the members, without whose continued support our Club would not be where it is today. I look forward to the next year with confidence.

Ted Parker

April 2007