

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 49th Annual General Meeting of the Wiltshire Ornithological Society. This is our first AGM at a field location, and in daylight! We hoped that this would encourage more members to attend. For those who are interested, we will go for a walk around the reserve afterwards, and hopefully see some good birds.

- This is my last AGM as Chair, and it has been an absolute honour to serve the Society in this role. Over the past 6 years we have made some really positive changes. We made youth membership free, and we now have a small but thriving youth section. We also have a presence on social media with Twitter and Instagram Accounts. Not everyone is a fan of social media but it is an important platform for a lot of people, especially the younger generations.
- I would like to thank all of the committee for their hard work in serving the society for the past year. We are still holding the Executive Committee meetings over Zoom. This has the advantage of saving on driving and we can attend them when not at home, including when abroad!
- David Little has been my absolute rock during my tenure as Chair. In addition to being both very efficient with administration and willing to take on any other tasks. He has provided me with sound advice and guidance I thank David wholeheartedly for his.
- One of our main functions is to record birds in Wiltshire and the role of Recorder is pivotal. We are incredibly lucky to have someone as brilliant as Paul Castle in this role. Paul is widely respected for his work and as a result has been invited onto the UK Rare Breeding Birds Panel.
- Hobby: Thanks to the Hobby editorial board of Paul Castle and Stephen Edwards for producing another excellent Wiltshire Bird Report. Thank you also to all the text writers, artists and photographers who have contributed. Moving forward, we would welcome new people onto the editorial team, so if you would like to help, please get in touch. I have a special note of thanks to Bill Quantrill who has stepped down from the Hobby Editorial Board after many years. Bill has given many years great service to WOS, both in relation to the Atlas and also for Hobby. Thank you very much Bill.
- I would like to thank the Records Committee of Rob Turner, Granville Pictor, Kim Milsom and Mark Gurney for their consideration and assessment of records for the year.
- Unfortunately, the BTO still do not have a representative in Wiltshire and the BTO really need for someone to take on this role. There are a good number of BTO members in the County, they just need to be coordinated and have a line of communication.
- The Indoor Meetings post remains vacant and is mainly being covered by David as the Secretary but we do need to have a dedicated person in post. Indoor meetings have been poorly attended with some great speakers which is a real shame.
- Outdoor Meetings Last year our longstanding Outdoor Meetings Organiser stepped down from the role after years of sterling service. A volunteer took the role on briefly but decided that it was not for them and so they stepped down. We have a thriving Outdoor Meeting Group and to date, we have managed to continue the outdoor meetings programme with 13 meetings attended by a total of 142 people. But it is really important to fill this role. If you are interested please let us know.
- WOS News: Thank you very much to the WOS News Editorial team: Christine Johnson and Alison Rymell for the continued high standard of our quarterly bulletin. I personally love reading WOS News and I know that it is important to a lot of our members. One of the key strengths of WOS News that makes it just so interesting is the wide variety of articles provided by our members. Please keep articles coming in so that Alison and Chris can maintain the high standard.
- Finance: Our Treasurer, Ted Smith, stood down from the role in September due to moving away. Ted has not only done a brilliant job as Treasurer, but he has provided the Committee

with great advice and wise counsel. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ted for his valued contribution to the Society. We have a new Treasurer in John Lee. I first met John when I was ringing farmland birds on the Pewsey Downs. John joined WOS and almost immediately became Treasurer. John is very welcome on the Committee and has already been extremely supportive to me with regard to financing our conservation projects.

- This year we have received two bequests from the Wills of two of our members. Derek Sharman who was one of our founding members and Lynne Hallam who was a very keen and active member. These bequests are very gratefully received and we will use the money for the best possible use.
- Conservation Projects: The Tree Sparrow population stabilised this year. The population fell over the winter again. The decline of the past 5 years is very concerning, but it is reflected across the country with declines being noted in most areas where Tree Sparrows still exist. Last year 110 pairs on the Marlborough Downs and Pewsey Downs fledged 1100 young at an average of 10 young per pair which is a record for 'average fledged'. This shows that breeding success is not a problem, and that winter survival is the issue for Tree Sparrows. In recent years a chap from Dorset set up and ran a nest box and feeding project for Tree Sparrows in the south-west of Wiltshire. He pulled out of the project two years ago but did not tell us until this Spring. As a Society we quickly got in touch with the landowners and took the project over, so the fate of Tree Sparrows in Wiltshire rests firmly with WOS. Jonny Cooper and Alison Rymell are running this for us.
- We are blessed to have strong populations of Corn Buntings in Wiltshire. Last winter we hosted a field event for an International Corn Bunting working group. Conservationists from 6 countries attended and we shared our experiences of monitoring Corn Buntings. We continue to share information that is assisting conservation of Corn Bunting across western Europe.
- Membership. Amongst my favourite emails are when Frank Mogford emails the Committee informing us of new WOS members. Membership remains above 500 members which is great and following a talk by Frank, in a first for the Society, we now have a cub pack as members! In the past year our youth membership has increased from 12 to 18.
- Social Media: 18 months ago we started a WOS Instagram account. It is managed by two of our younger members, Izzy Fry and Charlie Murphy. So far we have created 38 posts and have 281 followers. The WOS Twitter account now has 656 followers, 94 up on last year. We need someone to manage the WOS Twitter account to keep it current. It is important because it is certainly bringing in new members and enabling us to communicate our work to the wider world.
- Lastly and by no means least. In fact, I am finishing with this as the absolute highlight of the last couple of years. Huge thanks to Charlie Murphy, ably supported by his mum Clare for making such a great effort developing our offer for the younger generations. All bird clubs are dominated by people of advanced years, but the younger generation are the future and getting them enthused by, and engaged with nature is so important. Keep going, you have our full support and anything we can do, we will.