

Chair's Annual Report for 2019 on behalf  
of the Committee/Trustees

This review covers the year 2019 and is written on behalf of the DOS Committee, who are also the Society's trustees. For continuity purposes, it is presented in the same format that has been used for many years now.

As a Charity, our main purpose is to make a significant contribution to the conservation, protection and monitoring of the county's avifauna.

Following the changes in personnel in the previous two years, 2019 was a year of completion of several key initiatives described below.

#### Finance

- Our accounts for the year have once again been prepared and audited in a timely manner, thanks to our Treasurer, Malcolm Hopton and our auditor, Paul Miller. The details are shown separately as an addendum to this report and we are extremely grateful to both Malcolm and Paul for their important contributions.
- The figures show a surplus of £1947 for the year (compared to a surplus of £4984 in 2018, £1939 in 2017 and a deficit of £1229 in 2016). It can therefore be seen that the surplus in 2019 was similar to 2017 after the higher figure in 2018 arising mainly from exceptional conservation related donations.
- Expenditure in most areas was broadly in line with expectations and the previous year except for Bulletin & Annual Report distribution costs where we saw a slight increase but still below the 2017 level and a decrease in Derbyshire Bird Report printing after a review of numbers printed.
- Income from donations, gift aid and the provision of data, all made valuable contributions towards our overall costs. Data sales continue to show a downward trend over the last few years despite a temporary improvement in 2018.
- We continue to receive a useful income from sales of the remaining stock of the Birds of Derbyshire – during 2019 we sold 16 copies against a target of 15.
- The Pimm Fund holds restricted funds to be used to benefit young people. We have accessed it for a variety of opportunities in the past and continue to promote our willingness to consider new initiatives and projects. One grant of £150 was made in 2018.
- In 2019 we carried out our annual reassessment of our Reserves Policy (how much cash we keep as a contingency reserve) in line with Charities Commission Advice. We will continue to keep in reserve an amount equivalent to two years' subscriptions receipts – currently at least £16,000. The accounts show that current reserves exceed this amount.
- In 2018 we introduced a policy of granting Life Membership to members who reach 50 years continuous membership of the DOS. During 2019 we moved two members to Life Membership under this policy.

## Conservation and Research

- We continued to work closely with many other conservation bodies and to make grants where appropriate. The latter included our well-established winter feeding-stations at the seven locations previously selected. We have also provided some funding to help the Hathersage Swift Group purchase 60 Swift boxes.
- We were involved in several planning applications during the year including again objecting to the Derby County Council proposals for Elvaston Castle CP. We work closely with DWT on planning applications when they involve ornithological impact.
- In addition to these areas of financial assistance, we were actively involved in discussions and bodies such as the Eastern Moors Forum and Carsington Water User Liaison Group. We also worked with and assisted other organisations which included Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Peak District National Park Authority and local bird clubs and conservation groups. In respect of DWT, we continued to write letters of support to aid their applications for grant funding, as well as liaising closely with them on a range of matters.
- The Swift project continued in conjunction with DWT, led by Nick Brown, and the DOS is very happy to be the home for the records generated. This created a base from which to assist property owners, retain existing nest sites and monitor populations. Nick provided regular updates for interested parties, as well as for the DOS Bulletin.
- Our DOS Field Officer, Richard Winspear, continued our involvement in the Barn Owl monitoring scheme which has expanded into the supply of nest boxes and the formation of an expert team. Richard leads the Conservation Sub-Committee and organises the Willow Tit survey that began in 2019, planning considerations, protection for new bird-rich sites and how to engage members in conservation work. Richard has kept members up to date using the Bulletins and continues to champion conservation for the society.
- DOS was very active in monitoring the successful nesting of Red Kites at four sites in the county and worked closely with Nick Brown (DWT) and Anthony Messenger (SPRSG). DORIS data was instrumental in identifying the three additional new nesting sites located in 2019. We have also used our extensive database to help Nick Brown with his quest to locate Lesser Spotted Woodpecker in the county now this species has become very difficult to find.
- The DOS was present at the Hen Harrier Day held at Carsington Water in August, unfortunately we did not have a stand; this has highlighted the need to invest in the necessary equipment and resources to have a DOS presence at events during summer 2020. A budget was agreed at the November committee meeting and Steve Thorpe has offered to run our events programme.
- In September Dave Richardson and Vic Bevan (our Conservation Officer) attended a one-day seminar on rewilding the Dark Peak held at Sheffield Hallam University and organised by the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. This was a very interesting day and several requirements and ideas were discussed to progress this interesting project.
- Our tree plantation at Darwin Park (DOSWOOD) continues to remain in a secure environment thanks to the goodwill of the site owners who also provide any ongoing maintenance that is required. As it matures, the site is also providing a growing list of bird records.
- It is not possible here to thank everyone personally in a brief report but those recording and assessing rarities (Rod Key and his sub-committee), protecting rare breeding birds (Roy Frost and his colleagues), combating wildlife crime, undertaking

counts such as WeBS, studying and reacting to planning and working closely with like-minded organisations, are all adding value that we believe extends well beyond the boundaries of our own county. It is very easy to underestimate the amount of time and energy that goes into these parts of our mandate.

- Willington GP is a major reserve owned by the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) and during the year we worked closely with the DWT reserves management team who produced a reserve management plan and a plan to rejuvenate the working parties at the site. Work has concentrated on removing self-seeding birches from the reed beds and clearance of the islands opposite the hide.

## Communication and Education

- One of our most important roles is to produce the annual Derbyshire Bird Report and make it available to a wide range of users, libraries and research bodies, as well as to our own members. As in all recent years, this was again published during the target month of November thanks to editor, Syd Garton, ably supported by a hard-working team. More than half of the DBRs were hand delivered (with a very worthwhile saving on postage) thanks to our much-appreciated volunteers. Thanks also to John Parlby in his first year as Distribution co-ordinator – not an easy task and admirably taken on board by John.
- It again proved possible to produce eleven monthly newsletters (the DOS Bulletin) which are highly regarded by members as well as serving many other purposes through wider circulation elsewhere. We continue to be indebted to our editor, Steve Shaw and to all of those who provided the bird notes, weather summaries and articles during the year. The number of Bulletins sent out electronically continued to grow with the benefit to the recipients of getting the newsletter earlier and in colour, however the default delivery method continues to be by mail. 2019 was the last full year with Steve as Editor and the role has been taken over by Paul Buckley.
- We were again able to enjoy a range of indoor meetings during the year, including three joint meetings with other clubs, thanks to Paul Bingham's careful planning and those who provided help on each occasion. As in previous years, we spread the venues around the county, so that they could be enjoyed by both members and the general public. Attendances were again generally healthy with a good number of non-members joining us, particularly at the Allestree evenings.
- During 2019, Alan Wragg took over from Deb Booter (thanks to Deb after several years in the role) as Field Trip Co-ordinator and arranged an excellent mix of field trips with a varied programme containing visits to both new sites and old favourites.
- All indoor meetings and field trips were well advertised on our website and in the monthly Bulletin, with the latter also including a full report on each of them.
- Our Publicity Officer, Peter Carefoot, continued to represent us at both conservation meetings and public events, however during 2018 Peter resigned from the post after several years' excellent service in the role for which many thanks are due. Matt Reed picked up the baton at the end of 2018 and will develop the role in the coming year.

## Database, Website and Social Media

- The DOS Records Information System (DORIS), was launched on 1 January 2000 and provides the data and focus for our recording of species within the county. By the end of 2019 DORIS held some 1.05 million records having passed the 1 million records milestone in February and we believe that this is one of the largest computer databases run a by any county in the country and could not have succeeded without the many hours per year of data inputting by our volunteers.
- Kate and Bryan Barnacle have again continued to put in considerable time and effort in producing the Bulletin Bird Notes each issue. They spend many hours each month on the most popular part of the Bulletin and their contribution is significant.
- The website remains extremely important in terms of our general communications and is subject to regular updates and daily bird sightings and significantly aids both recruitment and DBR sales.
- Our presence on social media continues and both our Twitter feed (1367 followers) and Facebook page were both relaunched during the year by Steve Thorpe who joined the committee in 2019. They are useful places for up to date bird news and news of events.

## Committee and Administration

- As usual, we held three committee meetings in 2019; held in March, July and November. From time to time we receive requests from members to observe and several did so during the year.
- Because the committee meetings are three to four months apart, I continued to run monthly administration meetings with some of the Society's officers to provide oversight of the key DOS areas of membership, finance, issues arising and DOS representation at meetings. These ensure that important items have not been overlooked between the formal committee meetings and any items requiring financial outlay are then ratified at the main meetings.
- We reviewed our Health and Safety Policy in 2019 and full risk assessments are now in place for all indoor and field trip venues.
- As Membership Secretary Brian Hallam has a key role as membership subscriptions represent 70% of our income. Ensuring that all our members pay the required subscriptions on time is a challenging and time-consuming task which should be recognised. Even so, every year we face a headwind as around 5% of members fail to renew and leave the DOS meaning we need to recruit at least this number to stand still each year – something we have been successful at doing. (One thing you can do if you pay by Standing Order is to check that the amount reflects the current rate subscription rate of £17 per annum per household).
- Whilst many members are active in terms of participation or providing records, others are content to support the charity and its endeavours via their subscriptions. We are extremely grateful to them all.
- As in the past, we would like to thank all of those (some named above, but many not) who work so hard and have contributed so much to the running of DOS.
- We must thank the four members of the committee who are standing down this year: Steve Shaw, Bryan Barnacle, Matt Reed and Huw Morgan. We will be gaining Paul Buckley and Clive Prescott for the coming year.

## Conclusion

2019 was a year of gaining the benefit from the administration and technical changes we have made over the last two years. Our finances remain strong and we have a good team in place to move forward.

We believe that this report is an appropriate summary of our main activities and efforts for the year. I should also like to thank all who have supported me on our committee over my third calendar year as Chairman as well as the many members who have been so ready to assist.

Dave Richardson – Chair of DOS Committee and Trustees