Minutes of the 27th Annual General Meeting of the African Bird Club held online on Saturday 23 October 2021

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair warmly welcomed participants to the 27th AGM of members of the African Bird Club which was once again a virtual meeting (enabled by virtue of the amendments made to the constitution at the last AGM). A total of 35 members who had registered in advance joined the Zoom meeting, including from all over Africa. Taking part were:

David Fox; Susie Squier; John Caddick; Paul Buckley; Geoff Randall; Richard Charles; Adrian Skerrett; Chris Bowden; Kay White; Nonie Coulthard; Helen Baker; Anne Varney; Mokamoli Motomelo; Benedictus Freeman; Mercy Kariuki; Marlene Reid; Tim Watson; Anap Ishaku; Lincoln Fishpool; Sam Ivande; Olly Fox; Lynda Donaldson; Kevin Raven; Jerry Garth; Ulf Ottersson; Clara Cassell-Jud; George Eshiamwata; Grace Pam; Francis Guetsi; Paul Thompson; Andrew Bruce; Fiona Sanderson; Steph Tyler; Giuseppe Micali; and Moussa Sega Diop.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Nigel Redman, Stephen Lowe and Phil Hall.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the 26th AGM

A draft of the minutes had been published with the notice of the AGM on the ABC website. No corrections were submitted and the minutes as published were taken as approved.

4. Presentation of the Trustees’ Report for 2020

The Chair presented the Trustees’ Report for 2020. He began by listing the names and roles on Council of trustees of ABC since the last AGM (Annex 1) and thanked them for all the work they have done, and continue to do, on behalf of the Club. Special thanks were given to Phil Hall and Chris Magin, who were both retiring as of this meeting. Chris had agreed to carry on performing the role of Conservation Officer for the time being until a successor is identified. It is important to recognise that all trustees are volunteers. It requires a significant amount of time and effort to keep the Club going. Council are always interested to hear from members who would be interested in joining the running of the Club. The Chair invited any member who is interested in becoming or getting more actively involved to email him in confidence at chairman@africanbirdclub.org.

The Chair went on to outline the new five-year strategic plan to take the Club through 2025. This new strategy includes several high-level outcomes, including to make ABC’s conservation programme more effective by increasing the scale and diversity of the grants we offer. In addition, the Club intends to become more active in communicating the wide spectrum of threats and challenges facing African birds, and in proposing and campaigning for conservation solutions. Council intends to focus on growing our membership in the ABC region and expanding our wider network of supporters.

A summary of key statistics was presented, notably that by the end of 2020 ABC had 1,237 members in over 60 countries, including 344 supported members from all over the ABC region. Every member was asked to renew their membership on time and encouraged to recruit or recommend new members. The Chair extended the Council’s thanks to all 161 ABC members who took our anonymous online survey in 2020; we are continuing to act on your feedback.

The Club’s new Major Grants Programme was introduced and a summary provided of the Conservation and Expedition Awards made in 2020. ABC raised over £50,000 to fund 14 conservation awards and 2 expedition awards in 2020. Conservation awards supported projects in Benin, Cameroon, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The expedition awards were made in support of important projects
in Ethiopia and Malawi carried out with substantial local participation. The Chair thanked all the members of the Conservation Committee who manage ABC’s awards programme – Tim Dodman, Paul Donald, Lincoln Fishpool, Chris Magin (Chair), Kariuki Ndang’ang’a and Hanneline Smit-Robinson.

The Chair noted and thanked the Club’s Major Donors (Annex 2), whose generosity enabled the Club to fund the various projects, and hoped that business will pick up for the Club’s Corporate Sponsors (Annex 3), which have been hit hard by the pandemic.

The Club produced the usual 2 colour bulletins with a total of 288 pages. Digital editions also continue to be distributed to members and are available on the Bulletin app. Good progress has been made expanding and improving the Birds of Africa app, which is a significant asset of the Club and has rightly been recognised as "An incredible resource that transforms birding in Africa". The Chair expressed gratitude to John Caddick and his team for their work on developing the app. Offers of help are always much appreciated, please do get in touch with John if you can help.

The Chair updated members on the new website which a small team of trustees have been working on, along with Kevin Ravno, the Club’s website and technical manager, and outlined the Club’s presence across a number of social media platforms and encouraged members to join AFRICORN, the new African ornithology listserv that seeks to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge on African birds.

The Club increased its campaigning over the past year, joining campaigns to end the commercial trade in terrestrial wild animals worldwide and to save vultures across Africa, which are now among the most threatened birds on the continent. The Club also had a presence at the Virtual Birdfair held in lieu of the annual British Birdwatching Fair and exhibited at BirdLife South Africa’s first ever Virtual African Bird Fair. This included a presentation by John Kinghorn on the new generation of African birders who are overcoming obstacles and pursuing careers in birding and conservation.

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The Chair concluded by recognising and thanking those individuals and entities on whose essential contributions ABC’s various activities depend (Annex 4).

5. Presentation of the Club’s Accounts for 2020

The Treasurer presented the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2020, which had been posted on the website. This represents the first year of accounts for the Charity as a CIO. The Treasurer provided an overview of restricted and unrestricted income and reserves: income has fallen compared to 2019, reflecting the substantial legacies received in 2019. We anticipate losing the revenue from Corporate Sponsors through 2022 due to difficult financial circumstances. Our reserves are at a healthy level, however, well above what is required. It was noted that the Club holds its funds in cash, meaning it is accessible if needed.


The Treasurer recommended that Wettone Matthews be appointed as the Independent Examiner for 2021 in place of Michael Goddard, who does not have the software necessary to produce accounts for a CIO, so he had requested to step down. Wettone Matthews are a Hampshire-based firm of 35 chartered accountants who specialise in charity accounts. The motion was proposed by Anne, seconded by Susie Squier and passed by the members present.

7. Election of Trustees

At each annual general meeting, the four trustees who are longest serving must retire in accordance with the charity’s constitution. As a result, the following Trustees would be standing down with immediate effect: Paul Buckley, Phil Hall, Stephen Lowe and Chris Magin.

Paul Buckley (who was to continue as Vice Chair) and Stephen Lowe (not having served for four consecutive terms) were both eligible for reappointment and stood for re-election. In
addition, the Club was delighted that Mercy Kariuki (who works for BLI in Cambridge) was standing for the first time.

The motion to elect the trustees was proposed by David Fox and seconded by Richard Charles and passed by those members present.

8. Any other Business

The Chair indicated that the date and time of the 2022 AGM would need to be confirmed in due course. PAOC15 had been postponed (again) to November 2022; if possible, we would look to hold the 2022 AGM alongside it in Zimbabwe (which would be the Club’s first AGM in an African country).

Mercy greeted the members present and expressed her thanks for the opportunity to join Council; she looked forward to contributing. The Chair thanked her for standing and welcomed her on behalf of Council.

Immediately after the AGM there followed online presentations by Dr Fiona Sanderson (Birds, carbon and cocoa in the Greater Gola Landscape) and Dr Sam Ivande (Building capacity for ornithology and conservation science in West Africa). Both were well received and stimulated lively question/answer sessions.
Annex 1: Trustees since last AGM

Paul Buckley (Vice Chair & Country Representatives Co-ordinator)
John Caddick (App Project Manager)
Lynda Donaldson
Janet Faden (Communications Officer)
David Fox (Chair)
Phil Hall
Sam Ivande
John Kinghorn (Youth Representative)
Stephen Lowe (Corporate Sponsors Officer)
Chris Magin (Conservation Officer)
Nigel Redman (Bulletin Liaison)
Susie Squier (Secretary)
Anne Varney (Treasurer)

Annex 2: Major donors

Tasso Leventis (ABC President)
March Conservation Fund of the Tides Foundation (Ivan Samuels)
Bird Conservation Fund
Mark and Mo Constantine
Caroline Adams
Richard Charles

Annex 3: Corporate sponsors

GOLD
AviFauna NatureSSor
Birding EcoTours
iGoTerra
Rockjumper

SILVER
Birding Africa
Limosa
Safari Consultants
Tadele Travel

BRONZE
Birdfinders
BirdQuest
Lawson’s Safaris
WildWings

SUPPORTERS
Venture Uganda
Annex 4: Essential contributions

Membership Administration: Heather Tarrant
Bulletin: Guy Kirwan, Ron Demey, Lionel Sineux, other members of the Editorial Board, Gillian Thomas, Swallowtail Print, RSPB Logistics
eBulletin and Bulletin app: PageSuite
Website: Kevin Ravno, Southmedia
Birds of Africa app: Rockjumper, APLORI, Mountain Hops Software, g-Bird, Bloomsbury Publishing and everyone who has provided content and support for the app
ABC Country Representatives in 50 countries
MoU Partner and Mailing Address: BirdLife International