Chairman’s Newsletter

December 2018

The African Bird Club
is 25 years old in 2019!

25th Anniversary AGM and Members Day
Saturday 13th April 2019
Natural History Museum, London

The Club was formed in 1994 following a proposal by a few enthusiasts with a common interest in African ornithology. Our 2019 AGM marks the 25th birthday of a thriving club with over 1,150 members which has awarded more than £350,000 in conservation grants for the benefit of African birds and their habitats.

This is, beyond doubt, something worth celebrating! Please do make a very special effort to join us in London on Saturday 13th April for a great occasion. The day will feature

- an eminent speaker panel: Yakhat Barshep, Nigel Collar, Dick Forsman, Sarah Havery, Stephen Pringle, and Nigel Redman
- Wild Sounds and Books sales and signings, with thanks to Duncan McDonald, in whose home the Club was born!
- a raffle featuring an array of prizes suitable for a special occasion
- more social time for refreshments, book purchases, and to catch up with old friends.

Let’s make this a special party! Please put Saturday 13th April 2019 in your diary now. Be there with us to help launch our cherished Club on its next 25 year journey. Thank you.

BirdFair 2019
16th - 18th August
Appeal for Volunteers!
We are in urgent need of volunteers to help us man the ABC stand. If you are attending and can spare a few hours, or half a day, it would be very greatly appreciated.
Please contact Paul Buckley at

buckleypr@yahoo.co.uk

ABC- App update

We are delighted to tell you that the Birds of Mauritius App can be downloaded from both the Google Play Store and Apple iStore. Please download a copy and send us your views even if you are not planning a visit to Mauritius in the near future. The App is intended as the prototype for the rest of Africa so it is important to understand if you have any suggested improvements or problems. Our next project is to build the Birds of Africa App with support for Nigeria / Benin / Togo and Ghana initially. This is a much larger project than Birds of Mauritius and requires help from members especially in the areas of developing species’ text and the provision and processing of bird calls. If you would like to help the Club produce what will be a major contribution to the conservation of Africa's birds, or have skills which you think are applicable to this project, please contact John Caddick john@caddick.com."
eBulletin - an option for all members in 2019

In response to requests from many members, we are preparing to offer the eBulletin as an option for ALL members, starting with the March 2019 (26.1) edition.

The eBulletin, a digital version of the familiar Bulletin of the African Bird Club (BABC), produced for us by PageSuite https://pagesuite.com, has so far been available only to Supported Members in Africa, who do not receive the hardcopy version. It has proved extremely popular, so in company with many similar organisations, ABC will now offer the digital version as an option to all members.

To celebrate this event, and to offer you the highest quality product, we have worked with PageSuite to upgrade the specification to maximise its accessibility and further improve the reading experience. Of course, the eBulletin is already designed for use on PC, tablet and smartphone, using both iOS and Android operating systems. The upgrades now include:

- an improved Sign In page
- The option to access the eBulletin via a free, downloadable App (iOS or Android) allowing reading online or by downloading the issue to your device for offline use - eg whilst travelling, in ‘flight safe’ mode, or where wifi or network access is anticipated to be bad or absent. The downloaded item, which takes up drive space, can subsequently be deleted as required.
- an ‘article pop-up’ facility; if you wish to read a specific article outside of the journal page view, it can be presented as a discrete article.
- PageSuite will make available the preceding five issues via the App.

Once we are certain that the further development work is complete, and the email mass mailing procedure is in place, we will circulate all members to ask if you would like 1) hard copy Bulletin only 2) eBulletin only, or 3) both. If no reply is received to the email enquiry, we will continue to send the hard copy version only.

Please be aware that, whilst the product is extremely robust, you must give it the best chance to work perfectly online - use desktop or tablet in preference to smartphone (just a size issue), use the best possible wifi or network signal available, and ensure that your device and its operating system/drivers are as up to date as possible.

There is an important point to make: Council has decided not to offer these options at differential membership subscription prices. The aim is to improve choice for members. Production of the eBulletin comes at a cost to the Club which will only partly be covered by savings on postage, and we believe that members will wish their subscriptions principally to continue benefitting the Club in its work on behalf of African birds.

Please look out for your message from us early in 2019 asking for your preferences, and for those of you who choose to include the eBulletin in your package of membership benefits, we do hope you enjoy it.

Website issues - message from John Caddick, ABC Webmaster

Many of you use the ABC and Afbid websites on a regular basis and we are pleased to say that website activity has been high in recent months. We are sorry to say, however, that in late April, a BOT was found on the site presumably as a result of a malicious action. The site required to be restored from an early April version and considerable work was needed to reinstall the April updates and carry out security maintenance. In early September, the site was moved to a new Internet Services Provider, a move which went smoothly but meant that some downtime was incurred. We hope that most of this activity was not apparent to our users but it is possible that some of you noticed a drop in service levels in the past few months. If you have any website problems, please contact me, John Caddick at john@caddick.com.
British Birdwatching Fair, Rutland Water, 2018

The ABC stand welcomes many members and visitors each year

ABC Chairman Richard Charles (right) gratefully receives a cheque for £2,000 from Pete Morris, BirdQuest, in respect of their Conservation Tour, January 2018

(All photographs by Nigel Birch)

Highlights of BirdFair 2018:

- Adam Riley, Rockjumper, WINS the Bird Brain of Britain quiz, winning £1,000 for ABC!
- Keith Betton delivers the ABC Lecture: Africa’s Best Birds...the Top Twenty to a packed venue, AND represents ABC in the Best Days with International Birds competitive debate
- Over £1,000 income from the stand for the Conservation Fund
- Our thanks to all who worked so hard for the Club over the four days!

CORPORATE SPONSORS

Our grateful thanks, as always, to our loyal and generous Corporate Sponsors

GOLD: Avifauna Nature Tours, Birding Ecotours, iGoTerra, Rockjumper Birding
SILVER: Birding Africa, Letaka Safaris, Safari Consultants, Limosa
BRONZE: Ashanti African Tours, Birdfinders, BirdQuest, Fieldguides, Lawson's Safaris, Venture Uganda, Madagascar Birds and Birding, SafariWise, Sunbird Tours.

ABC and BirdLife International

As part of our Memorandum of Understanding with BirdLife International, a joint review meeting was held on 2nd November 2018 at the David Attenborough Building, Cambridge, to explore increased collaboration. The ABC team was led by Paul Buckley, Vice Chair, and the BLI team by Julius Arinaitwe, Director, Partnership Capacity and Communities Department. ABC and BLI will work together, promoting conservation projects of mutual priority, notably vultures, a potential major project for the ABC 25th anniversary, and assistance in identifying ABC Regional Representatives. Paul will now collaborate closely with BLI, who are also invited to send an observer to ABC Council meetings.
Supported Members News

Our Supported Membership scheme has proved extremely successful. This offers full membership to persons in Africa who would benefit from ABC membership but who may be constrained by the cost of paid-up membership. Supported members receive the eBulletin, but not the hard copy version. Members have generally been nominated by trusted partners in Africa; they are usually students, trainees, field guides, field researchers, or 'just' keen African bird watchers. Self nomination, pointing out active involvement with African birds, is also welcome. We now have over 230 Supported members in Africa.

Recently, we were contacted by Supported Member Mariama Sanneh from Gambia, who has been doing some great field work led by Clive Barlow, as a result of which she has recently been appointed to a full time post with the Gambian Department of Parks and Wildlife Management. This is a perfect example of how Supported Membership of ABC can engage great people with the Club, to mutual benefit, and I felt readers would be interested in her story.

Mariama, who wishes to become a communicator for Gambian conservation, was welcomed as a Supported Member to The African Bird Club in February 2018. A citizen of Kartong on the south Gambian coast she gained a keen and active interest in birds as a young teenager at school and was positively encouraged by the West African Bird Study Association, a Gambian based NGO currently active in future Kartong bio-development, and regular Rutland Osprey Group UK visits to her classroom.

Mariama has accompanied Clive Barlow and friends over the last year in the field on regular outings to forest patches & seashores to cover a variety of ornithological efforts and primate bio-acoustical work. Her first acknowledgement will soon appear in an article concerning Little Grebes and she is currently working with Clive & others on a study concerning an aspect of Hooded Vulture foraging.

In the last eight months Mariama has gained valuable field experience working with visiting Bangor & Cumbria Universities, UK, in ornithological, ecological & behavioural studies. A comprehensive series of beach surveys looking at by-catch was successfully conducted in March-April. She has recently completed a diploma in Development Studies at The Gambian Technical Training Institute. Mariama has experience in ringing procedures which will prove valuable in future studies. Aside from pure ornithology her other key interest is in the role of local communities in protecting the ocean and restoring habitats and their faunal & floral content. Her drive is to be an independent woman, a successful ornithologist, and to become a communicator for Gambian conservation.
In the bush with a mist net, & stepping out, Mariama demonstrates the African mode of scope transport after a long morning in the field!

‘Mariama was a pleasure to work with and she really helped the field team feel welcome in The Gambia’ (University of Bangor & Leverhulme. Sept 2018)

Marianna’s objectives and motives exemplify the best in African Bird Club Supported Membership, and in African conservation generally. She enjoys full co-operation from ABC, Gambian allies & Clive Barlow. If you would like to contact Mariama Sanneh her email is mariamaksanneh@gmail.com

Please feel free to contact ABC at chairman@africanbirdclub.org to nominate a potential Supported Member in Africa, or nominate yourself, giving some relevant background details to support the application.

Occasional news stories of interest from Supported Members will be welcome for the Chairman’s Newsletter and/or for Club News in the Bulletin of the African Bird Club. Please accompany the story with a few, good quality photographs. We cannot guarantee that all submitted stories will be accepted.

**ABC on Social Media**

Facebook: 5119 members
Twitter: 895 followers
Yahoo Discussion Group: 1162 members

Moderated by our General Secretary, Phil Hyde, ABC can be found on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/groups/AfricanBirdClub/ , Twitter https://twitter.com/africabirdclub and the Yahoo Africa Birding Group – sign up via our website and follow Club>African Birding Group.
ABC Members' Day and AGM, 2019: Our 25th Anniversary!

Natural History Museum, London
Saturday 13th April 2019

I alluded to this landmark event in my opening remarks, but make no apology for encouraging you again to join us on the day. As you’ll have noted, we have arranged an exceptional panel of speakers for your interest and enjoyment.

Duncan McDonald of Wild Sounds and Books will be offering for sale several hundred of the currently most popular and new titles. However, there are thousands more titles and media on their website at www.wildsounds.com. Duncan will kindly bring any title for sale and collection, or for viewing with no obligation to buy, to the meeting if requested before 26th March 2019.

A raffle will be held, and we shall amass some temptingly substantial prizes!

And Finally

Thank you for reading this Newsletter, and we hope you have enjoyed keeping in touch with your Club. If you do wish us to keep in touch, and you have not yet given your explicit consent for us to do so, please do so now. This applies to all members, including Supported Members in Africa. If you wish to unsubscribe from receiving the Newsletter, and any other occasional contact from the Club, just let us know at the addresses given - but we hope you will stay with us! email: secretary@africanbirdclub.org by post: Secretary, African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, The David Attenborough Building, Pembroke Street, Cambridge, CB2 3QZ, United Kingdom.

Dr Richard Charles
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