



Annual Report of the  
**London Natural History Society**  
for the year ending  
**30<sup>th</sup> June 2006**

Registered Charity 206228  
© LNHS 2006

**Secretary:**

J. A. Edgington  
19 Mecklenburgh Square  
London WC1N 2AD

**Treasurer:**

M.J. West  
52 Trinity Road  
Ware  
Herts SG12 7DD

**Bankers:**

National Westminster Bank plc  
1 The Mall  
Ealing  
London W5 2PL

**Independent Examiner:**

J.L. Meyer  
Queen Alexandra House  
2 Bluecoats Avenue  
Hertford  
Herts SG14 1PB

## LONDON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

### REPORT OF COUNCIL FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2005 – 30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2006

Following the report to Council of a Working Group considering revisions to the Society's Rules, and with the consent of the Charity Commission having been received, members voted at the Annual General Meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2005 to adopt the new Rules which came into force immediately.

Council now comprises eighteen Trustees of whom five represent the Society's Sections and thirteen are elected at the AGM. Honorary Vice-Presidents are no longer Trustees *ex officio*. No Trustee other than Secretary and Treasurer may hold office for more than five consecutive years. Other changes include giving Trustees authority to determine the annual subscription, invest the Society's assets as they think fit, and delegate all but certain reserved powers to committees of Council. Four such Committees – Administration and Finance, Library, Programme, and *London Naturalist* – were appointed at the first meeting of Council.

The objectives of the Society now refer explicitly to recording so it is appropriate that, following extensive consultation with its Recorders, Council approved a Data Exchange Agreement with the local environmental records organisation, Greenspace Information for Greater London, governing the supply and use of species and habitat records. This means that members' records, other than any provided under conditions of confidentiality, will be publicly and (except for commercial purposes) freely available. It was felt appropriate in conjunction with this Agreement to carry out a review of the Society's Records Policy, in order to update and clarify Recorders' duties and responsibilities.

The promotion of scientific investigations, another of our objects, is heavily dependent on access to the Society's extensive and comprehensive Library. This is currently housed at Imperial College, which in January issued the Society with 12 months' notice to quit under the terms of a lease entered into in 1972. Council, working through the Library and Administration and Finance Committees, has been seeking alternative arrangements as a matter of urgency; the latest situation is outlined below.

"London's Heathland Heritage" is a project proposed by several London Boroughs and conservation organisations including the LNHS, and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Society's involvement has included several field meetings devoted to the flora and fauna of heathland, and events in which some of our members have passed on their knowledge to the public. Standing in stark contrast to this declining habitat, London's burgeoning weed flora was the theme of John Swindells' Presidential Address which will appear in *The London Naturalist*.

The President and Secretary met the incoming Chief Executive of London Wildlife Trust, Carlo Lorenzi, to discuss how our organisations could work together. On the national level, the Society, together with many other bodies and individuals, wrote to the Natural Environment Research Council expressing disquiet at proposals to close sites and cut staff at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. Though the closures will go ahead, the campaign was

not entirely unsuccessful and there is hope that activities of great importance to the Society, such as the Biological Records Centre, will continue to be supported.

### **MEMBERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION**

Membership of 1020 at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006, including 91 who had not yet paid, was slightly down on the previous year. 76 new members joined in the preceding eight months. We regret to record the deaths of Ms Cynthia Booth, Richard Green (a generous donor to the Society), Miss Jose Horwood, Royden Morgan, Mrs Lee Pledger, Roy Sherlock and Mrs Joan Walker. The death of Richard Fitter was recorded last year while Council was sorry to hear of the death, just after the year covered by this report, of the Essex ornithologist Mike Dennis.

Under Graeme Lyall the bi-monthly *Newsletter* has become essential and colourful reading. Other commitments including a growing family mean that Graeme will shortly vacate the Editor's chair – he will be hard to replace. The Society has, however, been fortunate in persuading Marc Calton to take over the website from the Davids, Bevan and Corcoran, who have managed it since its inception. A new initiative during the year was an internet message board for members, suggested and brought to fruition by Mick Massie. Any member with internet access is welcome to join, at <http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/LNHS-members>.

The Society's new display stands were seen at several events during the year, including the Natural History Museum's Open Days, the Lee Valley and Rainham Marshes Bird Fairs, and the BBC's wildlife fair hosted by the Mayor of London at the GLA building. We thank Catherine Schmitt, Angela Linnell, Mike Trier and many others who represented the Society.

Paul Mabbott delivered the annual Brad Ashby memorial lecture at the Royal Entomological Society. We are grateful to the executors of Brad's estate who have offered his collection of entomological slides on permanent loan in furtherance of the Society's educational and scientific work; the collection is at present held by Mike Trier on the Society's behalf. An agreement has been reached with the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society to hold an annual lecture on a subject of common interest. Starting in 2006, the lectures will be given at the Museum of London.

### **PUBLICATIONS AND JOURNALS**

*London Bird Report* 66 (2001) was published in early 2006, some eighteen months after the previous year's. The lengthening interval has been of great concern to Council, leading to the decision to award a contract to Peter Naylor to write the species accounts for 2002 and 2003. These will be published later in 2006 as a single issue covering both years. Council would be reluctant to commit further resources to the preparation of copy for future issues and has engaged with the editorial team to plan an annual production cycle within the capacity of the volunteer effort available.

*The London Naturalist* 84, for 2004, published in December 2005, covered a remarkable range of topics – for example, a review of London's slime moulds, including several new to Britain, is separated from a report of attempts to conserve the adder in our area by a short but eloquent account of the lichen-crusting grave of a Society luminary, Cyril Castell. A palaeozoologist himself, Cyril would have approved the variety.

Sales to non-members amounted to 51 copies of *London Bird Report* and 93 of *The London Naturalist*, including back numbers. 103 copies of the Society's occasional publications were

also sold. Catherine Schmitt is responsible for these sales which provide a useful service to the public as well as income to the Society.

### **RESEARCH STATIONS**

Both the Bookham Common and Hampstead Heath surveys had productive years. Publication of an annotated checklist of *The beetles of Bookham Common*, comprising more than one-third of the British list, is imminent, while Council has agreed in principle to collaborate with the Corporation of the City of London in preparing a new *Flora of Hampstead Heath*, intended for a general audience as well as more expert botanists.

### **SECTIONS**

Field meetings – 19 botanical, 53 ornithological and 23 of entomological and ecological interest – were, with some disappointing exceptions, well-attended. Sections will need to reflect whether their target audience is the interested amateur or the more sophisticated natural historian. A clue may be found in the very successful series of indoor meetings organised by the ornithologists, offering identification tips for the beginner, followed by field meetings where these were put into practice. Appreciation of the natural environment being one of the Society's objects, both experts and beginners (who will be tomorrow's experts) should be catered for.

Accounts of Sectional activities will be published in *The London Naturalist*.

### **LIBRARY**

The Society's Library comprises some 8000 volumes of which about half are journals. The lease at Imperial College having been terminated, its future is, at the time of writing, unclear. Council would prefer to retain it as an open-access collection in central London, and has made extensive enquiries accordingly. Unfortunately the major institutional and public libraries are themselves pressed for space and cannot help. Overtures to the Natural History Museum may yet bear fruit but if this and other possibilities fail to materialise Council has the choice of putting the Library into storage while seeking an alternative home, or disposal of the collection. Bearing in mind that many, though not all, members expect the Society to provide access to reference material in furtherance of its scientific and educational objects, neither alternative is palatable. Council commissioned a valuation of the collection, primarily for insurance purposes should an alternative home be found but also as a guide to its market value.

The Society was also required to vacate its stock room at Imperial College, which served as an office for our Librarian, Linda Hewitt, and a useful committee meeting room. Back numbers of books and periodicals have been removed to the City Corporation's hut where the Hampstead Heath Survey group meets, while arrangements are in hand to deposit the Society's archives with the London Metropolitan Archives at Clerkenwell. Finally, a large number of card index files, comprising ornithological records dating back to the 1930s, have been stored temporarily at London Wildlife Trust's offices awaiting digitisation. As yet, there are no plans for carrying this out and the future of these records is unclear.

*Approved at the Annual General Meeting, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2006*