

LONDON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
Registered Charity 206228

Report of the Society for the year ending 30 June 2016

Objects

The objects of the Society are the study and recording of natural history, archaeology and other kindred subjects, especially within twenty miles of St Paul's Cathedral, the promotion of scientific investigations, the appreciation and conservation of the natural environment and the publication in the Society's journals of scientific and educational papers. Activities and achievements in respect of these objectives are described below.

Governance: Council, Committees and Sections

A Council of Trustees, comprising the officers (President, Treasurer, Secretary), up to ten representatives of the members at large and one representative of each of the Society's Sections (currently five) governs the society. During the year Sarah Barnes represented the Ecology & Entomology section, Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne the London Bird Club section and David Bevan the Botany section. Stuart Cole remained as representative for the Bookham Common Survey. The post of Hampstead Heath Survey representative remained unfilled in this year.

Helen Baker continued as President until the end of 2015 when her term ended. No President was appointed at the 2015 AGM and the society has operated with this post unfilled for the remainder of the year.

Rule 4(c), limiting a continuous period of elected membership to five years, came into force in December 2005 and was first implemented at the AGM in 2010. Under this rule John Edgington, Keith Hyatt and Maria Roberts are obliged to stand down from council at the 2016 AGM.

The Administration and Finance Committee, chaired by Michael Wilsdon, dealt with much delegated business.

Membership

120 new members joined during the year, compared with 73 last year. The number of individual members currently stands at 921, compared with 874 at the same time last year, and 917 the previous year.

This is the largest number of new members in recent memory and contributed to the reversal of what had been an emerging trend of declining membership. Whether this reversal is an positive change or just blip in an otherwise worrying pattern is not clear. Council has been undertaking various projects, including starting work on revamping and

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modernising our website to make it more attractive and developing our social media presence which should help recruit a new generation of members. However membership and recruitment is not a matter for Council alone. We need members to tell us what they want from the society, what we should do more of and what would encourage people they know to join. Members who know people interested in natural history who are not LNHS members are encouraged to convince them to join us; to point out the obvious as in previous years if every member recruited just one other person we would double our membership.

Remember that the Society is not just for experts – field meetings are planned with beginners in mind, and newcomers are always encouraged to play an active part in the Society's affairs. If you know someone who is unsure whether to join invite them along to one of the field or indoor meetings.

We have been notified of and record with regret the deaths of the following members during the year to 30 June (date of joining in brackets): Mr Len Frusher (1976), Mr Peter Maynard (1947), Mr Michael Michaels (1966), Mr John Rogers (1991).

Finances

The annual financial report accompanies this annual report. The society continues to receive a significant amount of income as a result of members who pay under the gift aid scheme, and members are thanked for doing so. Any members who pay sufficient tax to be eligible for the gift aid scheme but currently not using it are encouraged to consider it.

Activities

The Botany Section continued to focus on field work for the Flora of London Project aiming to produce a new flora of the London area to replace Rodney Burton's 1983 Flora of the London Area. The Flora remains a high profile and important society project, members are strongly encouraged to join our recording meetings or submit their own records.

The Ecology and Entomology section continued its well attended programme of field and indoor meetings covering a diverse range of taxa and developing a group of regular attendees as well as more occasional joiners. The section again represented the LNHS at the annual exhibition of the British Entomological and Natural History Society. During the year work for the new Butterflies of the London Area started, this will be an update to society's earlier publication authored by Colin Plant.

Under the brand of the London Bird Club the Society has continued to run a series of field meetings showing the diversity of bird life that the LNHS area has to offer. Indoor meetings have continued to prove popular; in September 2016, the venue for these meetings changed from the Education Centre in Hyde Park to Burgh House in

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Hampstead.) A permit system for access to Thames Water's Queen Mary reservoirs was implemented in Summer 2016 – members wishing to access this reserve to observe and record wildlife should follow the procedure explained in the London Bird Club section of our website

The London Bird Atlas is making good progress to be finalised in early 2017, with publication in the second quarter of 2017. Council approved a proposal to reduce the expense to the LNHS by taking in full page advertisements and principal sponsors/advertisers who will in addition have their logo on the title page. It was also agreed to have it published as a joint publication between the LNHS and John Beaufoy Publishing.

Recording and recorders

During the year Roger Payne (18 April 2016) took on the role as bird recorder for Hertfordshire.

Thanks go to our recorders for all their continuing hard work.

Journals and other publications

The London Naturalist **94** (2015) was distributed to members. This was the first under our new editorial board led by receiving editor Nick Rutter. Nick and the board have maintained the high standards of this publication and it is good to know that the society's long established prestigious journal remains in good hands.

The London Bird Report for 2014 was published. The editorial board continues its hard work getting these reports out in a timely fashion. There is a lot of stages necessary in getting these out involving record submission, verification, validation, processing, and subsequent writing up so it is a tribute to their work that this all gets turned around so effectively.

The Administration and Finance committee has been looking into options for digitising back issues of our journals and making them available online. Michael Wilsdon has led on this work. Watch the newsletter for news on this project.

Work on the London Flora, London Bird Atlas and Butterflies of the London Area continues and is discussed in the Activities report above.

Library

David Allen the LNHS librarian continues his excellent work operating and maintaining our library in its home in the Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity at the Natural

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History Museum's Darwin Centre Phase 2 making it available to the public (for reference) and LNHS members (for borrowing). The library is an important resource for members providing access to a wide range of out of print and hard to find natural history titles, and unlike many other libraries the Angela Marmont Centre is very welcoming of people bringing in specimens to try to identify. Members are encouraged to make use of it.

Conservation of the natural environment

Rich habitats are still under threat from developers. The Society is often asked to lend its voice to protests against such developments. Council's view is that an appropriate campaigning body in such cases is the London Wildlife Trust, the LNHS being better placed to provide evidence-based advice if required. Our partnership with GiGL helps ensure that our high quality validated records are available for such purposes.

This report has been prepared with due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.