

Bulletin of the BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

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CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman's message

Subscriptions were due for renewal on 1 January 2013. If you have not already paid, please do so as soon as possible to avoid the need for further reminders. Please remember that the subscription is £25.

I am very pleased to report that all the Bulletins, up to and including Vol. 127 (2007), are now freely available via the Biodiversity Heritage Library website at www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/46639.

Helen Baker

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club will be held in the upstairs room at The Barley Mow, Horseferry Road, Westminster, London SW1P 2EE, at 5.30 pm on Tuesday 21 May 2013.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 12 June 2012 (see *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 132: 137–138, and the BOC website).
3. Minutes of the Special General Meeting held on 12 June 2012 (see *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 132: 138–139, and the BOC website).
4. Receive and consider the Chairman's Review, the Trustees' Report and the Accounts for 2012 (these will be available in the room before the start of the meeting).
5. The Bulletin Editor's report—Mr G. M. Kirwan.
6. Election of Officers and other Trustees. The Committee proposes that:
 - i. Mr Chris Storey be elected as Chairman (*vice* Miss Helen Baker)
 - ii. Dr Robert Prŷs-Jones be re-elected as *Hon. Secretary*
 - iii. Mr David Montier be re-elected as *Hon. Treasurer*
 - iv. Mr Nigel Redman be elected to serve as a Trustee (*vice* Mr Ken Heron-Jones).
Mr Steven Gregory's four-year term has also ended and he is not being replaced.
All other Committee members are eligible to serve at least one more year in office.
(See notes below)
7. Any other business (*any items should be received by the Hon. Secretary by 7 May 2013*).

Notes to the Agenda of the 2013 AGM

Item 6: Committee nominees for election

Chris Storey

Following national service and university, Chris Storey was an administrator in the British Council and then the BBC, working in both television and radio. Since his retirement he has been active in the voluntary sector, establishing a network for Community Service Volunteers; fundraising for Macmillan Cancer Support (in conjunction with the Richmond Orchestra of which he is a playing member); and recently completing an MA in Photographic Studies at the Univ. of Westminster. Chris has travelled extensively, mainly in the Palearctic but also Australia and more recently Brazil, on ornithological pursuits. He is a committed member of the British Trust for Ornithology and the BOC.

Nigel Redman

Nigel Redman has been an active birder since the mid 1960s. He is a publisher by profession, and is currently Head of Natural History for Bloomsbury Publishing, which includes the Christopher Helm and T. & A. D. Poyser imprints. He also works as a bird tour leader and since 1982 has guided more than 100 tours for Birdquest, mainly to Asia and Africa. He is a former chairman of the Oriental Bird Club, has served on the councils of the British Ornithologists' Union, the Ornithological Society of the Middle East and the African Bird Club, and has been a member of the editorial board of *British Birds* since 1998. Nigel is also co-author of *Where to Watch Birds in Britain* and senior author of *Birds of the Horn of Africa*.

The 971st meeting of the Club was held on Tuesday 18 September 2012 in the Sherfield Building, Imperial College, South Kensington, London SW7 2AZ. Fifteen members and 11 non-members were present.

Members attending were: Miss HELEN BAKER (*Chairman*), KEITH BETTON, Cdr. MICHAEL CASEMENT, RN, STEPHEN CHAPMAN, Dr JOANNE COOPER (*Speaker*), DAVID FISHER, MARTIN GAUNTLETT, TONY GIBBS, RICHARD LANGLEY, DAVID MONTIER, Dr ROBERT PRYS-JONES, Dr PETER RUDGE, TONY STATHAM, CHRIS STOREY and PETER WILKINSON.

Non-members attending were: Mrs CHRISTINA CASEMENT, Mrs PAT CHAPMAN, Mrs MARGARET GAUNTLETT, PETER LANGSDON, CHRIS LANGSDON, Mrs MARY MONTIER, JOHN OLIVER, Dr IRIA RATAKAINEN, DOUGLAS RUSSELL (*Speaker*), Dr BARD STOKKE and Ms CHANTEL WILLIAMS.

As Prof. Graham Martin had been unfortunately obliged to withdraw from delivering the talk advertised in *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 132(3), two shorter replacement talks were presented.

Dr Joanne Cooper (Natural History Museum Bird Group, Tring) spoke on *John Gould's glittering gems: the 1851 hummingbird cases at the Natural History Museum*. John Gould famously exhibited his collection of mounted hummingbirds during the Great Exhibition of 1851 at a specially designed pavilion at the Zoological Gardens, London. More than 75,000 people visited the dazzling display, among them Queen Victoria and Charles Dickens, where they could view some 25 state-of-the-art cases containing hundreds of specimens set amongst foliage in the most life-like manner possible. Upon Gould's death in 1881, most of the mounted hummingbird series was purchased by the Natural History Museum, along with >6,000 other bird specimens from Gould's private collection. Many of the cases were subsequently placed on public display in the central hall of the museum. However, as a result of damage sustained, notably in World War II, only a few of the cases now survive intact behind the scenes, the majority having been dismantled and the specimens preserved individually. Despite their original fame, relatively little attention has been given to the recent history of the collection and how the surviving material reached its present condition. The recent restoration of one case by taxidermist Derek Frampton in preparation for exhibition has revealed much about the cases' original construction, highlighting in particular their many vulnerabilities and the curatorial challenges faced by their custodians. Ravaged by time and indeed war, it is hoped that the refreshed interest in this collection may eventually lead to some of these fragile survivors once again taking their place on public display.

In *Dr George Murray Levick (1876–1956): unpublished notes on the sexual habits of the Adélie Penguin*, Douglas Russell (Natural History Museum Bird Group, Tring) described a previously unpublished four-page pamphlet by Dr George Murray Levick R.N. (1876–1956) on the 'Sexual habits of the Adélie Penguin', which was recently rediscovered at the Natural History Museum (NHM) at Tring. Printed in 1915 but declined for publication with the official expedition reports, the account was based on Levick's detailed field observations at Cape Adare during the British Antarctic (Terra Nova) Expedition 1910. Levick was one of the six members of the 'Northern Party' led by Lt. Victor L. A. Campbell, R.N (1875–1956) charged with exploring the coast west of Cape North in Antarctica. Levick's graphic and now infamous account commented on the frequency of sexual activity, auto-erotic behaviour, and seemingly aberrant behaviour of young unpaired males and females including necrophilia, sexual coercion, sexual and physical abuse of chicks, non-procreative sex and homosexual behaviour. Zoologists are nowadays more free to publish on such allegedly unusual behaviours, which have since been widely documented, but the seminal observations in Levick's pamphlet have until now been totally overlooked. Describing and reinterpreting selected observations in detail, Douglas commented on its significance as a forgotten work by the pioneer of research on Adélie Penguin *Pygoscelis adeliae*. Results from Douglas' investigation have now been published in Russell, D. G. D., Sladen, W. J. L. & Ainley, D. G. (2012) *Dr. George Murray Levick (1876–1956): unpublished notes on the sexual habits of the Adélie penguin. Polar Rec.* 48: 387–393.

An outstanding event in the Club's 2012 calendar was a conference on the scientific legacy of Allan Octavian Hume. The one-day conference held on 23 October 2012 was organised jointly by the Natural History Museum (NHM) and South London Botanical Institute (SLBI), and supported by the BOC and the Linnean Society of London. It was held at the Natural History Museum, London SW7 5BD. The full title was *Indian ornithology, British botany and Allan Octavian Hume (1829–1912): the scientific legacy of a founder of the Indian National Congress*. Approximately 80 people attended the event.

Hume—'Indian ornithologist extraordinaire, enlightened administrator ... early leading light of the Indian National Congress and founder of the South London Botanical Institute'—presents an enormous challenge for students of his achievements and legacy, but the contributors to the conference skilfully and beguilingly steered us through the 'thickets' of his remarkable life.

The conference was opened by Ian Owens (Director of Science, NHM). Next, Honor Gay (NHM), in her succinct account of Hume's life—Haileybury, his rise to Secretary of the Department of Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce in the Indian Civil Service in 1871, his fall from grace in 1879, the formidable ornithological activity, his central role in the founding of the Indian National Congress, his final return to England in 1894, the establishment of the South London Botanical Institute in 1910 and his death two years later—set the scene for the day's discussions.

Robert Prÿs-Jones (NHM), Nigel Collar (BirdLife International) and Pamela Rasmussen (Michigan State University Museum) outlined Hume's ornithology and his scientific legacy, including the vast collection of over 100,000 specimens, his 200 published papers plus 'his own home-grown journal *Stray Feathers*' and the 148 taxa described by him that are still accepted today. Their account culminated with Hume's break with ornithology precipitated by the 'truly crushing blow' in the winter of 1882–83 of the theft and destruction of all of his notes for his planned 'Birds of the British Indian Empire' plus 6,000 foolscap sheets of his museum catalogue. Hume's final contribution to ornithology was his donation in 1885 of >80,000 specimens to the then British Museum (Natural History).

Roy Moxham and Prof. Edward Moulton (Univ. of Manitoba) dealt with Hume's Indian Civil Service career, his involvement with the completion of the salt tax 'customs hedge' (The Great Hedge of India), his passionate concern to change through improved agricultural practice the health and well-being of the 'millions of our people' and his many initiatives to modernise the administration of British India. Prof. Sriram Mehrotra (whose paper was presented by Alice & Edward Moulton as he was unfortunately unable to attend in person) then showed how, following his retirement from the Indian Civil Service at the start of 1882, Hume's growing impatience with the rigidities and short-sightedness of Colonial rule resulted in his active involvement in political reform, leading to the formation in 1885 of the Indian National Congress of which he was the first General Secretary. He held this position until 1894 when he left India and retired to England, settling in Upper Norwood, south-east London.

Hume's Upper Norwood years, his renewed preoccupation with botany, his botanical collections, his founding in 1910 of the South London Botanical Institute and that organisation's current activities were outlined by Keith Spurgin (Emeritus Recorder for the Botanical Society of the British Isles) and Petra Broddle (SLBI).

The facts about Hume's legacy, alive and active in south-east London, ended the conference on a very positive note. Throughout the day his enigmatic personality had at times overwhelmed—all that prodigious effort in appalling conditions, away from home and family—and at others seemed elusive and contradictory. But the contributing speakers left us in no doubt about the stature of the man, the immensity of his contribution and the importance of addressing and recalling his achievements.

Chris Storey

CORRIGENDUM

In *Bull. BOC* 132: 170, five species were inadvertently omitted from the head of the Appendix. These are:

		min.	max.	wet	dry	evidence	IUCN	Peru	EBA	Peru	remarks
<i>Nothoprocta pentlandii</i>	Andean Tinamou	300	2,100	X	X	C, R					XC5257, 21770, 21771
<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>	Comb Duck	200	400	X	X	P					
<i>Penelope barbata</i>	Bearded Guan	1,360	2,150	X	X	P, R	VU	EN	SCA		XC5179
<i>Penelope albipennis</i>	White-winged Guan	550	1,400	X	X	C, P	CR	CR	T	P	
<i>Tigrisoma fasciatum</i>	Fasciated Tiger Heron	800	1,360	X		P					see Angulo <i>et al.</i> (2008)