

Chair's report 2022 John Crossley

Looking back on this last year as Chair of OFC committee, I wondered what an outsider or newcomer would think of the opportunities for discovering nature, indoors and outdoors, that the Club has offered in these few months. They would be hugely impressed and, I have no doubt, drawn in by the variety of activities. In no particular order, we had at the dawn of the year our traditional New Year Ramble - so welcome after Covid-inflicted restrictions – and what an great ramble it was, around Finstown along paths that few of us knew existed. Before that we had an autumn session on mosses and liverworts in Binscarth wood; in spring, Bag the Bruck was back; then we had bird-watching outings to Mull Head and Brodgar; a walk up Russadale in Stenness as part of the Orkney Nature Festival; a joint outing with the British Dragonfly Society to North Walls; a meeting of the newly-formed invertebrates group; a visit to the Noup area of Westray to look for *Primula scotica*; another mossing session in Orphir; and a bioblitz at Stromness Reservoir. All events were most enjoyable, even though the weather frowned on some of them. But we are not put off by weather, unless truly awful, and that caused one or two cancellations. In the winter months there was a varied programme of indoor events, mostly talks on Zoom, on subjects including Carder Bee nests in Stromness, the Orkney Native Wildlife Project (stoats), the part shell remains can play in archaeology and the ever-engaging Nature Showcase. I am particularly fond of the last of these, where local experts present some aspect of their knowledge and discoveries. Our most recent indoor event was a talk in person at the St Magnus Centre in Kirkwall, for the first time since Covid lock-downs, on multi-species recording; there was the option to attend this one by Zoom. Many thanks to the people, too many to mention by name, who have contributed to this rich programme.

Special thanks are due to those whose continuous efforts ensure Club activities and business run smoothly: Graeme Walker, Secretary; Brian Ribbands, Treasurer; Jenny Taylor organiser and author of the regular newsletters; Jenny Taylor and Meghan Taylor who do the website; Anne Gascoigne who makes our Facebook group a source of fascination far beyond the membership of the Club; and Anne Gascoigne again, whose columns on Club activities are some of the most readable in the Orcadian. The committee has met regularly. At the last AGM we gained two new members, Michael Gee and Jamie Moloney, and said goodbye to Sydney Gauld and Reuben Johnston. Sydney has been a stalwart of the committee for decades, and Reuben is also a veteran of the club who had been on the committee at other times in the past. Our President, Peter Slater, has retired from the position this year. Thank you Peter for the encouragement and knowledge that you have given us over the last few years.

The Club is represented on some outside groups. These include Outdoor Orkney, the Orkney Wildlife Information and Records Centre (OWIARC, run by OIC), the Orkney Woodland Group and others. OWIARC closed last year on the retirement of Sydney Gauld and remains moth-balled; there are hopes of it being revived and re-invented, but no guarantees, certainly not in the short term; we continue to urge action on the Council. The Orkney Woodland Group has been less active in recent years for a variety of reasons, but is now up and running again; with an expected increase in tree-planting in response to Government incentives the advice of knowledgeable local naturalists is going to be crucial in guiding appropriate planting.

The 2022 Bulletin 'Orkney Nature' was again a great collection of articles and reports by many contributors. It is produced by an editorial and production team headed by me. It does the Club proud. Sales and circulation have increased a little year on year, partly thanks to our setting up an online shop three years ago and the efforts of Graeme Walker and Megan Taylor.

So I am pleased to report on a very active year and a thriving, inclusive club. We aim to attract people of all ages and abilities to enjoy and study Orkney's natural history. We might extend this into some practical conservation projects. However, the Club does not run itself and we very much welcome new people coming onto the committee and getting involved, in any role – if that interests you, please contact the Secretary or any of the committee.