

## Chair's Speech MBS AGM 2021

The conclusion of last year's speech quoted Vera Lynn with "we'll meet again". I'm not sure any of us expected to still be meeting via Zoom a whole year later.

Covid Regulations led to us only having one Local Outing this year, a Rule-of-Six trip to Cheshunt in May. Some of us were lucky enough to get brief glimpses of a Nightingale, and most of us had good views of a number of Hobbies hawking dragonflies over the water. Some had good views of Cuckoo too.

These late Spring migrants gave us a re-assurance that, even if our day-to-day activities were being restricted, Nature and her rhythms were continuing unabated, and would still be there on the other side of the pandemic.

We were unable to run any Coach Trips at all, and the only travelling most of us did was via Gaye's amazing collection of Speakers in our online "Indoor" meetings. We got as far as Australia, via Speyside, The Gambia, Central Europe and Kazakhstan. We also have to thank Gaye for organising the Christmas Quiz which replaced our traditional Pre-Christmas Walk.

Our Heath Walks on Tuesdays have continued whenever we were allowed out to play! Initially we were in various combinations of six people, and more recently we have enjoyed larger socially distant groups, averaging around 18 or 20.

I think now would be a good time to officially thank Meg for leading regularly over the last 10 years or so. She has said that she will be spending most of her time in Kent from now on but has promised to pop back and visit us every so often.

The Heath Walks will continue into the future; although we are becoming looser in the route we take, we still intend to end up at Kenwood for coffee and cake!!

I can't overstate how important Marion's role as Publicity Officer has been. Over the pandemic year she has kept us all in touch via our website, our two Facebook pages and numerous Tweets. She has sent over 30 Newsletters and contacted well over 400 people via Mailchimp each mailing. In a time when opportunities to meet and go birding have been severely limited, both Gaye and Marion have done sterling work keeping our Members informed and entertained.

I am extremely proud to say that at the end of the season 2020-'21, despite all the problems and difficulties we have all faced, our membership stood at 152, with a record year-on-year rise over the last three years.

I would like to thank all of you, the Members, for keeping positive and supporting us on the Committee. We are now at the start\* of our Fortieth year of Birding, and I look forward to our celebrations in December.

Hopefully in the next few months we will get to meet in person as we continue the Tuesday Heath Walks and re-start our Local Outings and Coach Trips.

Until then, thank you again, and Happy Birding in the season to come.

\*In fact last season was our 40<sup>th</sup> year as 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2021 is the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our first meeting... we will nevertheless be celebrating in December!