

British Birds Rarities Committee

Press Release



Wednesday, 28 April 2010

New Members required for BBRC

BBRC seeks a new candidate to replace our longest-serving member John Sweeney in June 2010. We are preferably looking for an individual with knowledge of rare birds and birding in Scotland to ensure the continued representation of a voting member from this Country. The prime qualifications of candidates are;

- a widely acknowledged expertise in identification,
- proven reliability in the field
- a track record of high quality submissions of descriptions of scarce and rare birds to county records committees and BBRC
- considerable experience of record assessment
- the capacity to handle the considerable volume of work involved in assessing upwards of 700 records per year.
- the capacity to work quickly and efficiently
- easy access to and knowledge of IT
- regional credibility

BBRC's nominee is Richard Schofield. Richard lives in Aberdeen. A birder from a very young age, initially in Cheshire and North Wales, he then moved to Aberdeen to study zoology. Here his interest in migration and travel took off. A spell working on the North Sea oil rigs followed university. Offshore he was able to watch migrating birds unhindered by a possible career in oil whilst saving up enough to finance several long birding trips. He has been a self-employed ornithologist for over twenty years, organising and leading over 150 tours to over 50 countries on all continents and now as a consultant in the UK. He has worked for many organisations including J.N.C.C., R.S.P.B., B.T.O. and W.W.T. on a variety of surveys from land, sea and air. Despite all this he still retains enthusiasm for birding in Scotland and has served on the North-East Scotland Rarities Committee for most of the last thirty years and on the Scottish Rare Birds Committee from 2001 to 2008. Whilst Richard enjoys the support of BBRC, we would welcome any alternate nominees who would be suitable. These should be sent to the Chairman of BBRC before 31 May 2010, with a proposer and seconder, and the written agreement of the nominee.

The successful candidate will replace John, who has been on BBRC since 2002. John's knowledge of the Scottish rarity scene has been much appreciated and he has consistently brought balanced and reflective views to his assessment of rare birds during his full-term on the committee. He has also investigated the identification criteria relating to several species and sub-species, most recently culminating in the joint authorship of a comprehensive paper on the identification of Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* in *British Birds* (*Brit. Birds* 103: 142–183). Fortunately for BBRC, John has offered to provide further support of this nature after

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his retirement and the Committee continues to be extremely grateful for the contributions that ex-members provide in this respect.

At the same time as seeking a replacement for John, we are also seeking to confirm the nomination of Nic Hallam on the committee. Nic was co-opted onto the committee in April 2009 (see *BB* 102:274). He has proved to be a very committed and reliable voting member and is prepared to serve for a full-term. Nic is based in Oxfordshire and does much of his birding at Farmoor Reservoir, where his impressive list of finds includes Britain's only inland Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens*, along with three Bonaparte's Gulls *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*, two Franklin's Gulls *Larus pipixcan* and a Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*. His other finds in this land-locked county include Oxon's second Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*, and he has served on the Oxfordshire Rarities Committee for 25 years and is co-author of the county bird report. Nic is widely travelled in Europe and further afield. As per our Constitution, we would welcome any alternate nominees who would be suitable. These should also be sent to the Chairman of BBRC before 31 May 2010, with a proposer and seconder, and the written agreement of the nominee. After this date, if we have received further nominees, a voting slip and list of candidates with relevant details will be sent to all county recorders and bird observatory wardens for an election, as per section 2.2.4 of our Constitution (see <http://www.bbrc.org.uk/constitution.pdf>).

Finally, Lance Degan has decided to retire from the committee one year before the end of his term due to pressure of other commitments. It is a great shame to lose Lance, who has provided a consistent approach to rarity assessment during his time on the committee and brings a good knowledge of the Yorkshire birding scene. At least his retirement should provide even more time for rarity hunting at Spurn. BBRC currently has two members living in Yorkshire, so we determined in this instance a geographical replacement was not a priority. We are delighted to announce that Steve Votier has accepted an invitation to be co-opted to the committee to fill the vacancy provided by Lance. His birding travels in the UK include protracted spells in Norfolk, the Northumberland coast, Shetland and Glasgow. He is currently resident in Plymouth and spends a significant time birding in Devon and Cornwall. Steve's pedigree as a rarity finder will be well known to British birders, with an enviable list of rarity finds from throughout the UK. He has travelled abroad throughout the Far East, North American and the Middle East, and has worked at Long Point Bird in Canada, the International Bird Watching Centre in Eilat and worked for two years as assistant warden on Fair Isle. Among a number of published papers he has authored numerous identification articles, and currently serves on the BOURC and the editorial board of *British Birds*. Steve replaced Lance as a voting member of the committee from 1 April 2010. He will be co-opted for a period of 12 months, and there will be the opportunity for other candidates to be nominated during the coming year for an election if necessary.

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