

CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Bulletin of the BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

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CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 1004th meeting of the Club was held on Monday 16 May 2022 in the upstairs room at the Barley Mow, 104 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2EE. The meeting was the first to be held in person since the onset of the pandemic in 2020. It was a hybrid event, with the talk also being streamed live online via Zoom. A video recording was subsequently placed on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0C67RxcwBX0>). Twelve people were present in the room (and some 30 joined via a very intermittent Zoom link): Ms A. Belman, Mr P. J. Belman, Mr R. Bray, Mr G. M. Kirwan, Mr R. Langley, Mr R. Malin, Dr A. Mohan, Mr F. D. Mullen, Dr D. G. D. Russell, Mr S. A. H. Statham, Dr M. Stervander (*Speaker*) and Mr C. W. R. Storey (*Chairman*).

Martin Stervander, who is currently a Marie Curie Fellow in the Bird Group, Natural History Museum, spoke on the fascinating topic of *The evolutionary history of a remarkable radiation of South Atlantic finches*. The radiation in question, of the genus *Nesospiza* (now known to belong to the family Thraupidae) occurred on the remote, volcanic Tristan archipelago, which comprises three islands: Nightingale, 4 km², c.18 million years old and holding the two species, Nightingale Island Finch *N. questi* and Wilkins's Finch *N. wilkinsi*; Inaccessible, 14 km², c.4 million years old and holding the two subspecies of Inaccessible Island Finch, *N. a. acunhae* and *N. a. dunnei*; and Tristan da Cunha, 96 km², c.0.3 million years old and which formerly held one extinct taxon, now known only from a single specimen taken in 1812. On both Nightingale and Inaccessible, one taxon is small-bodied and small-billed (*N. questi* and *N. a. acunhae*, respectively), predominantly lowland distributed and feeds mainly on small grass seeds, whereas the other (*N. wilkinsi* and *N. a. dunnei*) is larger-bodied and large-billed, predominantly found on plateau/upland areas and feeds mainly on the fruits of the *Phyllica arborea*, the only indigenous tree, fruits of which are larger on Nightingale; on Tristan da Cunha, seemingly the only taxon present was small-billed. Bill size differences between the two *Nesospiza* taxa on Nightingale are larger than between the two on Inaccessible, and they do not intergrade on Nightingale but do in the uplands of Inaccessible, where intermediate phenotypes occur. Genetic analysis shows that, on each of these two islands, the two taxa are their own closest relatives, with those on Nightingale, but not Inaccessible, being genetically distinct at the species level; thus sympatric speciation has occurred on Nightingale. The evidence suggests that a small-billed coloniser arrived in the archipelago c.3 million years ago and radiated, with this being influenced by the fact that *Phyllica* did not arrive until later, c.1–2 million years ago.

The 1,005th meeting of the Club was held, in conjunction with the Linnean Society of London, both in person and via the online medium of Zoom on Thursday 6 October 2022. Professor Jared Diamond, professor of geography at the University of Los Angeles, but renowned for his wide array of knowledge and interests, spoke on *What's so special about New Guinea birds?*

The tropical island of New Guinea has long played a pre-eminent role in ornithology, which caused it to be chosen as the site for the BOU's Jubilee Expedition in 1909. Part of the reason is New Guinea's many species of extraordinary birds, such as birds of paradise, whose male ornamental plumages carry sexual selection to extremes; bowerbirds, whose males build the most elaborate display structures among animals; megapodes, the only birds that incubate their eggs by natural heat sources rather than by body heat; its diversity of parrots and kingfishers, orders that probably evolved in New Guinea; Greater Melampitta *Megalampitta gigantea*, the only passerine known to roost underground; and its many bird groups convergent on but unrelated to nuthatches, creepers, warblers, finches, wrens, and sunbirds of the rest of the world. Another reason is New Guinea's equatorial location combined with its high mountains, resulting in a range of habitats from tropical rainforest in the lowlands to glaciers on the highest peaks at 5,000 m. Still another reason is its simple geographic layout: a single central cordillera with montane allospecies arranged from west to east, separating northern and southern lowlands, with lowland allospecies arranged in a ring. New Guinea shouldn't be thought of as the world's largest tropical island, but instead as the smallest continent. New Guinea has proved ideal terrain for studying speciation, ecological segregation, and other biological phenomena. New Guineans themselves are walking encyclopedias of knowledge about their birds. All this was highlighted in



a well-illustrated talk (available to view at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJBG57boZ6k>) that explained how these and other features make New Guinea birds special. The only disadvantage to visiting New Guinea is that, thereafter, you'll find the rest of the world boring by comparison.

The Club plans to organise its next talk for March 2023. Keep an eye on the BOC website (<https://boc-online.org/meetings/upcoming-meeting>) and the BOC Twitter account (@online_BOC) for news of this.

OBITUARIES

Margaret Jane Carswell (1935–2022)

BOC Committee was sad to learn of the death of Margaret Carswell, aged 87. Margaret's life began in 1935 where she and her twin sister, Pen, were born on a tea estate at Cachar in north-east India. During the Second World War her father, Harold, served as a volunteer in the Assam Valley Light Horse, helping to build airstrips for the war effort.

After the war the family returned to England and Margaret attended a boarding school in the south of England. After the death of her father, her mother, Winifred, moved to London and it was here Margaret studied medicine at Westminster Medical School.

It was there Margaret met her husband, Wilson Carswell. Shortly after qualifying, they moved to Uganda, with two young daughters on what was supposed to be a two-year contract. A third daughter and a son followed soon afterwards, and the two years became 20 years.

Margaret had always had an interest in natural history, particularly all things ornithological. While living as a child in India and later in England animals were always a big part of her life, and she had pets wherever she was, including an owl she rescued at boarding school and looked after in her dormitory. During her time in Uganda this passion continued and she spent many hours meticulously recording the birdlife, often during turbulent times.

She travelled across the country from the mountains of the Ruwenzoris to the deserts of Karamoja and was just as excited at spotting a nondescript 'little brown job' to a striking Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex*. Many hours were spent putting up and taking down mist-nets and recording the vital statistics of all the birds she caught and released, while always hoping to hear that someone else had caught one of her birds somewhere in the Northern Hemisphere.



Figure 1. Margaret Carswell ringing birds on the Entebbe Peninsula, Uganda, in 1978 (© Grace Carswell)

Throughout Margaret's time in Uganda, she continued to practice medicine, working at Nsambya Hospital in Kampala as one of a handful of doctors. Even after Britain severed diplomatic relations with Uganda in 1976, during Idi Amin's dictatorship when most British nationals had left, Margaret and Wilson continued to provide medical treatment to patients who often travelled on foot for many miles. During the civil unrest in Uganda, she dealt with endless political instability, frequent power cuts and water shortages, as well as hyper-inflation as she raised her family.

When the AIDS epidemic struck in 1980, she witnessed the devastation it brought first-hand. Margaret played a critical role collecting and shipping blood samples to the UK government research facility at Porton Down where they could be tested for the HIV virus. She also did much to ensure that the world was made aware of the AIDS disaster unfolding across Africa. She briefed visiting British ministers, WHO officials and medical experts.

Eventually Margaret returned to England and settled in a small rural village in Suffolk where, in 2005, along with three other ornithologists, she finally published her life's work *The bird atlas of Uganda*, a joint publication of the BOC and BOU. This still serves as a definitive ornithological record.

Margaret is survived by three of her children, four grandchildren and her ex-husband Wilson who remained friends until the end.

Nell Carswell

Vladimir Mikhailovich Loskot (1938–2021)

Vladimir Mikhailovich Loskot, Head of the Ornithology Department of the Russian Academy of Sciences, was born in Kobzarivka, a small village in the Kharkiv Region of eastern Ukraine on 24 August 1938. During 1945–55 he attended school in Kyiv but spent many of his holidays with his grandmother in the village of Orzhitsa, c.170 km south-east of Kyiv, where his interest in birds first surfaced. His painful childhood memories of the Soviet famine of 1946–47 haunted him, and he later described that long-lasting hunger as extremely painful, but his lifelong passion for songbird aviculture was also born during this period and continued until his last days, when he kept a Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*, a Woodlark *Lullula arborea*, a European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* and a Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina* at home during Covid lockdown.

His undergraduate studies in the Department of Vertebrate Zoology of Taras Shevchenko Kyiv State University (now Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv), where he studied under the distinguished Ukrainian ornithologists, Professors Alexander Kistiakowsky (1904–83) and Mikhail Anatolyevich Voinstvensky (1916–96), further nurtured his love for ornithology. After graduating in 1960, his long and distinguished museum career as a zoologist began at the National Museum of Natural History, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, and the Department of Invertebrates, Kyiv University. From 1965 to 1975 he worked in the Department of Vertebrates, Institute of Zoology, Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. The first of his many expeditions was in 1959–60, to the southern part of the Russian Far East, and over the course of 40 years he studied birds in many areas of eastern Europe and Central Asia, especially, including Moldavia (1966), Ukraine (1966–73), Crimea (1967–74), Caucasus (1973–94), Turkmenistan (1958–96), Kazakhstan (1977), Tajikistan (1967–68), the Altai Mountains (1975–77), Transbaikalia (1975) and the southern Kuril Islands (1965). During his 1966–75 expeditions, he collected c.1,000 skins of 136 species of birds, and 55 clutches of 33 species. These are deposited in the Zoological Museum in Kyiv, Ukraine.

In 1973 he successfully defended the first of his two doctoral-level scientific degrees, his Candidate of Sciences thesis on chats (*Saxicola*) and wheatears (*Oenanthe*) of the USSR at Kyiv University. This was followed in 1993 by his higher doctoral Doctor of Sciences thesis on 'Intraspecific variation and divergence of closely related songbird species of the Palearctic' at the Russian Academy of Sciences.

From 1993 he was chief curator of collections of the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg, Russia, later being promoted to Head of the Department of Ornithology. Sadly, his health declined following the death of his second wife, the renowned entomologist Professor Vera Andreevna Richter (1936–2015). Yet with characteristic energy, determination and passion he continued his lifelong curatorial and research career on taxonomy and systematics, speciation, intraspecific variability, and hybridisation. In a career lasting 60 years he published c.86 papers on ornithology. An extended biography and detailed list of his publications, photographs and taxa described can be found in the obituaries by Payevsky (2021) in *The Russian Journal of Ornithology* 30(2076): 2579–2586 (in Russian) and Payevsky *et al.* (2022) in *Zoosystematica Rossica* 31(1): 154–165 (in English), to the latter of which I am indebted for an array of details presented here.

On the night of 15 May 2021, at the age of 82, Vladimir Loskot died in hospital in St Petersburg from coronavirus infection. Many friends of the BOC knew him from his numerous collaborations and publications. He took part in the European Bird Curators' Meetings in Tring, Bonn and Prague, and I remember with great

fondness my discussions with him on the history of Soviet-era oology whilst visiting the collection of the Zoological Institute in St Petersburg during the Ninth International Meeting of European Bird Curators in October 2015. I am grateful to Vladimir's colleagues and friends, Jiri Mlíkovský (former Research Curator in Ornithology, National Museum, Prague) and Igor Fadeev (Head of the Ornithology Department at the State Darwin Museum, Moscow) for their reminiscences and help. A passionate ethnic Ukrainian, Vladimir Loskot's contribution to Russian and eastern European ornithology is one of extraordinary achievement and he is much missed by friends, colleagues and collaborators worldwide.

Douglas G. D. Russell

Clive F. Mann (1942–2022)

Clive Mann, who died in August 2022 aged 80, was a biology teacher who engendered lifelong affection among his pupils, using his jobs as perfect opportunities to study birds in Africa and Asia, as well as travelling widely to see birds elsewhere. Clive joined the BOC in 1972 and was a stalwart and active member thereafter, regularly attending dinner meetings at Imperial College, London, and subsequently at The Barley Mow, South Kensington, up until his untimely death. He will be sorely missed by all current members attending dinner meetings, for his ready welcoming smile and cheery banter.

Clive attended Colchester Royal Grammar School and joined the Colchester Natural History Society where birdwatching led him to learn how to ring birds, a pursuit which he later also performed in Kenya.

Following a degree in zoology and anthropology from University College London, in 1964 he travelled to Uganda, where he obtained a diploma in education from Makerere University, Kampala. After teaching at Soroti Senior Secondary School, he left Uganda for London in 1968, where he worked as a secondary school teacher in Stamford Hill and Tottenham, but Clive was soon back to Africa to take up a teaching post in Kenya at Kabarnet Boys' School. Later he spent ten years (1981–91) in Brunei, which ultimately led to his *Checklist of the birds of Borneo* (2008), a joint publication of the BOC and BOU.

Back in London he collaborated with Bob Cheke to produce two editions of *Sunbirds: a guide to sunbirds, flowerpeckers and sugarbirds of the world* (first published in 2001, with the second edition due for publication in 2023), and together they provided the sections on sunbirds and flowerpeckers to the *Handbook of the birds of the world*, vol. 13, in 2008. He also threw himself into BOC organisational duties. Having spent a brief tenure on the Committee in 1977–78, he rejoined this in 1999–2001, and then became its Chairman during 2001–04.



Figure 2. Clive Mann (© Konrad Mann)

One of us (MC), while serving as Hon. Secretary (1996–2004), and subsequently as Chairman (2005–09) is particularly grateful for Clive's valuable support during these years. He had a very large library of bird books, and knew many of their authors personally, which was invaluable for recruiting speakers for BOC meetings. He even kindly gave MC a copy of *The birds of Borneo* by Bertram Smythies (1960), having noted that the 50 illustrated plates were by Commander A. M. Hughes, RN, a fellow naval colleague, who also regularly contributed to the journal *Sea Swallow*, which MC edited for several years. MC is further indebted to Clive for arranging and presenting the splendid silver salver that marked his own retirement as Chairman of BOC in 2009, which has pride of place in his drinks cabinet.

Among other accomplishments, Clive also collaborated with Johannes Erritzøe on *Cuckoos of the world* (2012) and during the last two years of his life worked on the revision of the African non-passerines for the forthcoming fifth edition of the *Howard & Moore complete checklist of birds of the world*.

He is survived by Ania, Dominika and Konrad, and his sisters Marilyn and Yvonne.

Edward Dickinson and Michael Casement

REFEREES

I am grateful to the following, who have reviewed manuscripts submitted to the Bulletin during the last year (those who refereed more than one manuscript are denoted by an asterisk in parentheses): Juan I. Areta, Jo Balmer, James Bednarz, Shawn Billerman, Alex Bond, Vincent Bretagnolle (*), Jade Bruxaux, Galo Buitrón-Jurado, Kevin J. Burns, Caio J. Carlos, R. Terry Chesser, Bill Clark, Kevin Clark, Nigel Cleere, Mario Cohn-Haft (*), Nigel J. Collar, Thiago Costa, Marco Aurelio Crozariol, Normand David, Greg B. P. Davies, Geoff Davison, William DeLuca, Edward C. Dickinson, Robert J. Dowsett (*), Dale Dyer, James Eaton, Andy Elliott (*), Daniel Field, Clemency Fisher, Robert Flood, Peter Garson, Arthur Gomes, Carlos Gussoni, Kitt Heckscher, Rodney Kavanagh, Peter de Knijff, Alan Knox, Alexander C. Lees, Miguel Lentino, Michel Louette, Chris Lyal (*), Nicholas A. Mason, Fernando Medrano, Michael Mills (*), Pat Morris, Bernd Nicolai, Richard Noske, Urban Olsson, Jente Ottenburghs, Thane K. Pratt, Robert Prýs-Jones (*), Peter Pyle, Pamela C. Rasmussen, Nigel Redman, Paul Rose, Douglas Russell, George Sangster, Jonathan Schmitt, Fabio Schunck, Paul Scofield, Frank D. Steinheimer, Lars Svensson, Christophe Thébaud, Colin Trainor, Alan Tye, David R. Wells, Francisco Welter-Schultes, Iain Woxvold, Ding Li Yong, and Bruce Young. — THE HON. EDITOR

Friends of the BOC

The BOC has from 2017 become an online organisation without a paying membership, but instead one that aspires to a supportive network of Friends who share its vision of ornithology—see: <http://boc-online.org/>. Anyone wishing to become a Friend of the BOC and support its development should pay UK£25.00 by standing order or online payment to the BOC bank account:

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Friends receive regular updates about Club events and are also eligible for discounts on the Club's Occasional Publications. It would assist our Treasurer, Richard Malin (e-mail: rmalin21@gmail.com), if you would kindly inform him if you intend becoming a Friend of the BOC.

The *Bulletin* and other BOC publications

Since volume 137 (2017), the *Bulletin* of the BOC has been an online journal, published quarterly, that is available to all readers without charge. Furthermore, it does not levy any publication charges (including for colour plates) on authors of papers and has a median publication time from receipt to publication of five to six months. Prospective authors are invited to contact the *Bulletin* editor, Guy Kirwan (GMKirwan@aol.com), to discuss future submissions or look at <http://boc-online.org/bulletin/bulletin-contributions>. Back numbers up to volume 136 (2016) are available via the Biodiversity Heritage Library website: www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/46639#/summary; vols. 132–136 are also available on the BOC website: <http://boc-online.org/>

BOC Occasional Publications are available from the BOC Office or online at info@boc-online.org. Future BOC-published checklists will be available from NHBS and as advised on the BOC website. As its online repository, the BOC uses the British Library Online Archive (in accordance with IZCN 1999, Art. 8.5.3.1).