CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

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The 999th meeting of the Club was held via the online medium of Zoom on Monday 29 March 2021

Ron Summers spoke about *Abernethy Forest: its history and ecology*. Abernethy Forest is a nature reserve managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The forest has more Caledonian pinewood than any other area in Scotland. The trees in these remaining fragments are lineal descendants of an ancient forest that once spread across the Highlands of Scotland. Since the Bronze or Iron Age, the forest has been used by people for hunting, exploitation of timber, farming and now nature conservation. The talk described the changes caused by people and the natural processes that have shaped the forest, providing an environment for an astonishing diversity of wildlife (3,800 species of plants, fungi and animals). The lives and status of the 'big three' birds of pinewoods were described: Western Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*, Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus* and crossbills (*Loxia* spp.). Comparisons were drawn with natural forests in continental Europe, revealing the conservation measures that need to be taken to restore lost features in an attempt to create a present-natural forest.

The 1,000th meeting of the Club was held via the online medium of Zoom on Monday 24 May 2021

Comparative ecophysiologist Steve Portugal, Reader in Animal Behaviour and Physiology at Royal Holloway University of London, described *Bird flight and co-operative aerodynamics*. The talk discussed how birds co-operate and the mechanisms they employ to save energy during flight. The distinctive V formation of bird flocks has long intrigued researchers and continues to attract both scientific and popular attention. Through the use of novel bio-logging technology, and by working with the reintroduction scheme for the Critically Endangered Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*, studies have been performed on the relative positioning of individuals in a V formation, and the co-operative aerodynamic interactions that occur, at a level and complexity not previously feasible. The second part of the talk considered the seemingly more unstructured flocks formed by homing pigeons *Columba livia* var., and how individual personalities predict exploration and subsequent homing abilities, and flock positioning during homing flights.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Given the uncertainty surrounding the timescale of the current Covid-19 pandemic, details of forthcoming meetings in 2021 will be announced online via the Club's website: https://boc-online.org/meetings/upcoming-meeting, or follow the Club's Twitter (@online_BOC) and Facebook accounts (https://www.facebook.com/onlineBOC). Be sure to keep an eye on them!

OBITUARIES

Storrs Lovejoy Olson (3 April 1944–20 January 2021)

Avian palaeontology lost one of its most influential and unprecedented contributors with the passing of Storrs Olson in January 2021. His career spanned more than five decades, and his legacy comprises in excess of 450 peer-reviewed papers covering a wide range of subject matter, including anatomy, evolution, island dynamics, early natural history collectors, taxonomic nomenclature, and specific bird specimens. His early life was equally colourful, and my summary here follows Ellen Paul's at Ornithology Exchange (https://ornithologyexchange.org/forums/topic/44891-storrs-olson-1944-2021/). I also discuss the man himself, not only as my mentor and great friend for over 30 years, but also as an inspirational giant of palaeontology who initiated and nurtured my and many other scientists' careers.

Storrs Lovejoy Olson was born to Beatrice Lovejoy Olson and Franklyn C. W. Olson on 3 April 1944, in Chicago, Illinois. His father was a physical oceanographer, so from an early age Storrs encountered various biologists, including fish and bird experts. In 1950, his father took a position at Florida State University where Storrs met prominent Florida ornithologist Henry Stevenson, who influenced his interest in birds. He later

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became a teenage assistant to Horace Loftin, at a time when the latter was studying shorebirds on the Gulf Coast. Storrs moved with Horace and his family to the Panama Canal Zone, where he continued to collect and study tropical fish and birds.

After graduating from Florida State University, he undertook a M.Sc. under Pierce Brodkorb, a renowned palaeontologist. Storrs' Panama bird records also led to his friendship with Smithsonian ornithologist, Alexander Wetmore, who at the time was writing a monograph on the *Birds of the Republic of Panamá* (1965–84). Via this connection, Storrs obtained temporary work at the Smithsonian, followed by a Smithsonian-supported Ph.D. placement at Johns Hopkins University, which he completed in 1972. His dissertation on fossil rails (Rallidae) of the South Atlantic islands gained considerable favour with Smithsonian Secretary S. Dillon Ripley, and he was asked to contribute to the latter's monograph *Rails of the world* (1977).

Storrs Olson and Johanna Humphrey (Julian P. Hume)

As a result, in 1975 Dillon Ripley invited Storrs to become Curator of Birds at the National Museum of Natural History, Washington DC. During his time at the Smithsonian, Storrs participated in dozens of field expeditions to collect fossils and modern birds (more than 6,000 specimens), including trips to the islands of Hawaii, the Caribbean, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Japan, and the South Atlantic, and continental locales in North, South and Central America, South Africa, Australia, and Europe. Along with his first wife, Helen James, Storrs made the sensational discovery of fossil birds on the Hawaiian Islands, which substantially increased the number of known species. His fossil bird work covered the Eocene until the historical period. He even wrote a paper on bryophyte taxonomy, a subject that was of great personal interest and which resulted in his building the largest, privately owned library on the subject anywhere. He eventually donated the entire collection to the now aptly named Storrs L. Olson Bryological Library at the Univ. of Connecticut.

Storrs rejoiced in the use of language, especially with Greek and Latin application, best exemplified in his and Helen James' Description of thirty-two new species of birds from the Hawaiian Islands (1991, *Orn. Monogr*. 45), in which all remaining letters of the alphabet not previously used for Hawaiian bird genera were included to create a new generic or specific epithet. The most notable examples are the more challenging letters of x, y and z, with *Xestospiza conica*, *Telespiza ypsilon and Aidemedea zanclops* filling the gaps. Storrs was never afraid to express his opinion and some of his colourful descriptions of fellow scientists left nothing to the imagination. He was totally opposed to the bird-dinosaur theory, despite the fact that it is now generally accepted, and savaged anyone's work he felt was inadequate, self-promoting or inherently wrong. His knowledge of avian skeletal anatomy was incredible, and he could identify almost any bird from just a quick glance at a leg or wing bone. On one occasion, he even did this with the bones behind his back! He always maintained that just looking at a bird skin was the equivalent of buying candy from a store and keeping the wrapper after throwing the sweet away. In this context, he never forgave a certain renowned ornithologist who, in 1929, discovered the unique specimen of the probably extinct Makira Moorhen *Pareudiastes silvestris* on San Cristobal in the Solomon Islands. After the bird was skinned its body was discarded. Unless another specimen is discovered, which is now highly unlikely, certain aspects of its morphology such as its degree of volancy will never be known.

I too was not exempt from criticism. My first book *Lost land of the dodo* (2008), co-authored with Anthony Cheke, contained 90 pages of endnotes to accompany the main text. This required much toing and froing through the book to utilise effectively, so in his review of it in Biohistory of the Mascarenes, *Science* (2008, 321: 913–914), Storrs, in exasperation, described cutting the endnotes out in order to make them easier to consult. I thought this was purely a symbolic gesture, but on his bookshelf was a copy of the book with the endnotes section cut out, just as he had said. That was Storrs at his inimitable best!

He received many accolades during his career, most notably the Loye and Alden Miller Research Award from the Cooper Ornithological Society in 1994, and he gave the Smithsonian Secretary's Distinguished Research Lecture in 2007. Unsurprisingly, towards the end of his life and with continuing bouts of ill health, the publications slowed somewhat, but he retained a great interest in palaeornithology and was always encouraging to a younger generation of students. During these latter years, he received incredible support from his second wife, Johanna Humphrey, who constantly encouraged him to forge ahead in often quite

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difficult circumstances. The final blow was diagnosis of oesophageal cancer in late 2020, which robbed Storrs of enjoying two of the things that he liked best, eating and drinking. He lost a courageous fight against the disease the following January. Storrs Olson is survived by Johanna, his sister Susan Olson-Wallace, children Travis and Sydney Olson, and his granddaughter Linnea Louise Olson.

For my part, our paths first crossed in 1988 when I was trying to establish myself as an artist specialising in illustrating extinct birds. Not knowing anyone in the USA, I addressed a letter (in those pre-internet days) to a 'Storrs Olson, curator of birds, Smithsonian Institution' with a personal introduction, which included some photos of my artwork, in the hope that I might get a break. Unbeknownst to me, Storrs and Helen James were on Hawaii having just discovered a multitude of new fossil birds, and Storrs was looking for an additional outlet to publicise the discovery. If ever good fortune was on my side, my letter arrived right at that moment. Within a week or two, I received an enthusiastic response from Storrs that would ultimately launch my art and scientific career. Via Storrs and Helen, in 1990 I received funding to visit nearly all of the Hawaiian Islands to paint various scenes of interest in preparation for artistic reconstructions of the extinct birds. Before I returned home, Storrs invited me to stay at his then home in Arlington, Virginia, and to work on fossil material held at the Smithsonian. This was our first meeting and our friendship was instantaneous.

Over the following decades, we spent time together on field trips, as well as researching specimens at the Smithsonian and elsewhere. Inspired by these experiences, I initiated my own scientific career, culminating in a Ph.D. on Mascarene bird palaeontology. It was also during this time that I became aware of his extraordinary ability as an author. When compiling a scientific paper, Storrs never made notes or drafts, but constructed it entirely in his head and wrote it down in completed form. Just as joyous to experience, and to indulge in, were his legendary cooking skills. Ingredients included just about anything that flew, swam or crawled, and he delighted in the fact that many of his culinary efforts could be reused and reinvented to provide exquisite meals for days ahead. Nothing was ever wasted. Closely linked to these abilities was our shared indulgence of 'neck oil', as we liked to call it, and on more occasions than I can remember (or often cannot!), we sampled into the early hours, discussing extinct birds, scientific papers, future plans and just about any other subject. I regularly stayed with Storrs, initially in Arlington with Helen, and later in Fredericksburg with Johanna, and joined the Olsons at their residence on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, which for Storrs provided the perfect retirement and recuperation getaway.

Covid kept us apart for the last year, but we still had many post-pandemic plans, including a road trip from Fredericksburg to Nova Scotia, and another around the UK. His daughter told me that just a few days before he passed he spoke of our friendship and was really looking forward to meeting again. Alas, it was not to be! For me, Storrs' passing has a left a gaping hole in my life, but I rejoice in the memories of our time together and that I learnt so much from the experience. So for now my dear friend I bid you farewell; keep the neck oil on hold, and I'll join you at some point for a tipple.

Julian P. Hume

David Calder (21 December 1925–25 January 2021)

BOC Committee was sad to learn of the death of David Calder aged 95. David was a long-term member of the BOC, and served as its Chair during 1980–83.

David was born in Durban, South Africa, in December 1925 and attended Hilton School from 1939 to 1942, where he was awarded the Highbury Closed Scholarship. In 1944, prior to completing undergraduate law studies (Natal Univ., Pietermaritzburg), he enlisted in the South African Artillery, serving in North Africa, the Levant and Italy. His undergraduate studies were completed in 1946, gaining a merit for Politics, and in 1947 David was awarded a Rhodes scholarship to attend Merton College Oxford, where he read jurisprudence.

He returned to Durban and joined the family law firm, becoming an attorney in 1953. It was at this time that he met and married an Englishwoman, Joey Wright, and they subsequently had six children. His time as a soldier and at university had a profound impact on his political and social views, so in 1964 the family migrated to England where David enrolled as a student at the College of Law in Guildford. The same year he gained entry as an associate in the Chartered Institute of Secretaries, and he won the W. G. Hislop prize for the top student.

In 1966, David joined a firm of solicitors in London, became a partner in 1969, and retired in 1985. During the 1970s, David's appearance as the quintessential Englishman was confirmed when a group of American tourists stopped to photograph him outside the Law Courts. Unusually tall, he cut an impressive figure in a pinstripe suit and bowler hat, an umbrella over his arm and a copy of *The Daily Telegraph* under it. His legal upbringing evoked a lively intellect and a memorable store of anecdotes. Living in Surrey, he was able to indulge his interest in ornithology and assembled a significant library, learnt the art of traditional book-binding and used his skills to preserve his many books and ornithological journals, as well as a copious collection of his own notebooks.

His notes from the 1990s list any species seen and or heard, however common, on numerous trips to South Africa, as well as to Egypt and different parts of Central America. His attention to detail enhances many of his records, describing the number seen, behaviour or plumage. David also had a passion for opera,

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specifically Wagner, and his children bemoaned the fact that he played his hi-fi at a greater volume than they did.

Following the death of his first wife, David married the South African, Jean Barbara Lambert, and together they enjoyed an active social and travelling life. The aim of much of David's travel was to observe the natural world and he was seldom without his binoculars. He made frequent visits to numerous destinations during his retirement until age and frailty prevented this. In later years, David made a number of charitable bequests to educational institutions to support future generations of students and academic scholarship.

David is survived by six children, 15 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Very sadly, his wife Jean died on the same day as David, following a brief spell of ill health.

Philippa Luker and Tony Statham

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

We are pleased to welcome two new Associate Editors to the Bulletin's editorial team. Bruce Beehler (see *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl*. 135: 281) has been a member of the Editorial Board since 2015, and he will continue to manage papers pertaining to the New Guinea region. In contrast, Chris Sharpe is a completely new member of the team. He has worked on the conservation of Neotropical birds for more than 30 years, particularly in Venezuela, where he is a Research Associate of the Phelps Ornithological Collection (COP) and the NGO Provita, a founder member of the Venezuelan Ornithologists' Union, and editor of birds for the *IUCN Red Data book of Venezuelan fauna*. A former editor of *HBW Alive* and author—with Guy Kirwan—of *Birds of the West Indies* (Lynx Edicions, 2019), he is now an Associate Editor of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's *Birds of the world*. Chris is a consultant on Latin American conservation, focusing primarily on biodiversity data management and monitoring, conservation planning and assessment, and (increasingly) shorebird conservation.

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:

Barclays Bank, 16 High Street, Holt, NR25 6BQ, Norfolk
Sort Code: 20-45-45
Account number: 53092003
Account name: The British Ornithologists' Club

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).

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