

## CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

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# Bulletin of the BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

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## CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 1013th meeting of the Club was held in the upstairs room at the Barley Mow, 104 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 2EE, on 25 November 2024. Sixteen people were present: Ms A. Belman, Mr P. J. Belman, Dr R. A. Cheke, Mr R. Dickey, Mr A. Jackson, Mr M. Maternaghan, Mr E. Price, Mr R. Price, Dr R. Prŷs-Jones, Dr A. Richford, Mr D. Russell, Prof. U. Perktas (*Speaker*), Mr C. W. R. Storey (*Chairman*), Ms L. Vaughn-Hirsch, Mr M. Walton, Ms A. Wilson.

Prof. Utku Perktas (Dept. of Biology at Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey) gave a fascinating account of his research on turacos, a bird family endemic to sub-Saharan Africa. The talk outlined his quest to reveal their phylogeography, species limits and evolutionary relationships using DNA sequences. Analysis of hundreds of gene sequences revealed unexpected geographic diversity and cryptic taxa, leading to a novel reclassification of the family. In collaboration with Prof. Andrew Gosler at Oxford University, he also outlined his ongoing project to create historical databases of biocultural diversity by integrating African bird specimen data, offering new insights into the turacos' evolutionary history. His research offered a fascinating and clear example of the critical importance of museum collections and the research and genetic studies they facilitate. Prof. Perktas' talk is now freely available online via the British Ornithologists' Club YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iF0q3qRMHho&t=558s>).

## CORRIGENDUM

In the paper by Johnson *et al.* (2024, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 144: 376) Macaulay Library recording ML 51184 was identified as Band-tailed Pigeon *Patagioenas fasciata* and was used in the analysis of this species, but it appears instead to be a recording of Scaled Pigeon *P. speciosa*. This was one of three recordings used to support intermediacy in vocalisations between the *fasciata* and *albilinea* groups of Band-tailed Pigeon. This intermediacy is most evident in subspecies *P. f. crissalis*, and is also apparent in plumage and colour of the bill tip. Our doubts regarding the species status of the *albilinea* group thus remains unchanged pending further investigation. We thank Peter Boesman for kindly bringing the misidentification to our attention.

## BOOK REVIEW

Russell, D. G. D. 2024. *Interesting bird nests & eggs*. Natural History Museum, London. 256 pp, many colour photographs. Hardback. ISBN 9780565095529. UK£12.99.

Interest in bird nests has gradually increased among ornithologists, yet much remains to be discovered, particularly in the tropics. The Natural History Museum, Tring, which houses the world's largest collection of bird nests—c.5,000 examples—preserves a wealth of unique, historical, rare and even just plain curious items. This book features texts by Douglas Russell, Senior Curator of the museum's nest and egg collection, complemented by Jonathan Jackson's photographs of carefully selected material. The 256-page book showcases images of nests and/or eggs from 121 species, with individual texts dedicated to 119 of them. While eggs are depicted for most of the included species, the primary focus is on nests, which is especially valuable, as information on nests is often lacking in the literature.

The species are presented in taxonomic order, starting with Struthionidae and ending with Turdidae, with images on one page and the text opposite. The photographs, set against a white background, are beautifully presented, showing the specimen, its labels and original notes. When only the eggs are illustrated, the legend mentions an egg's average size. For nests, with or without eggs, the captions include measurements of the nest's size or the size of the box it is stored in. The legends also include details of 'clutch size', collector, date and location, as well as the species' conservation status. All measurements are provided in both millimetres and inches.

The texts are engaging and informative, often delving into fascinating historical details about the specimens featured. The book spans a broad temporal range, from the oldest nest in the collection, that of a Glittering-bellied Emerald *Chlorostilbon lucidus* collected in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1768 during Captain Cook's first circumnavigation, to a Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus obscurus* from 2020. However, most

of the selected specimens date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Examples are well distributed geographically, with species from all continents, including Antarctica. They range from common to extinct, like Syrian Ostrich *Struthio camelus syriacus*, Laysan Rail *Zapornia palmeri*, San Cristóbal Vermilion Flycatcher *Pyrocephalus rubinus dubius* and Norfolk Starling *Aplonis f. fusca*. Russell frequently highlights the use of anthropogenic materials in nests, including even in century-old specimens. The book also features nests with unique architectures, such as those constructed from saliva by White-nest Swiftlet *Aerodramus f. fuciphagus* or the oven-shaped nests made by Rufous Hornero *Furnarius rufus*. Additionally, there are nests collected or described by eminent ornithologists like John Gould (1804–81), Rear-Admiral Hubert Lynes (1874–1942) and David Snow (1924–2009).

Closing the book is a species list in taxonomic order, with corresponding museum registration numbers. However, the lack of an alphabetic index may make it difficult to locate a certain species, especially for readers unfamiliar with taxonomic sequences. In conclusion, this is a book that should be on the bookshelf of anyone working with bird nests and eggs, those interested in history, biological collections, animal architecture, or even casual readers who will find these accessible texts full of fascinating insights about bird nests and eggs.

Marco Aurélio Crozariol

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## OBITUARY

### David John Montier (1934–2024)

David Montier, former Hon. Treasurer of the BOC (1997–2014), was a man of many parts, all built upon the remarks made by his teacher at Eaglehurst College for Boys that he was the ‘cleverest boy’ she had ever taught. It transpired that this was no exaggeration—David was a natural intellect though he would never have described himself in such terms. He was born in Northampton on 30 March 1934 and had a brother who died young. On leaving school, David embarked on a career in accounting and qualified as a Chartered Accountant. National Service took him to various parts of the country, including Unst, the northernmost island in the Shetlands, where he encountered the seabird colonies he came to love. Professionally, he made his mark in London with the prestigious firm Thompson McLintock, which would eventually become KPMG. His practice was international and took him to Vancouver, Montreal and Trinidad. In the years that followed David transitioned into industry joining the shipping company Furness Withy, where he rose to the position of Finance Director. He was tested by the company’s financial difficulties, especially in the late 1970s. During this time, David and his wife Mary spent time in Hong Kong. He remained as a trustee of the Furness Withy pension scheme until 2005.



After retiring in 1992, David joined the BOC, when Club meetings and dinners were held in the Senior Common Room at Imperial College. He became a member of the Committee in 1996, and Hon. Treasurer in 1997, in which role he continued until 2014. In those years, the Club was a membership organisation with more than 400 members whose subscriptions had to be chased and tracked. David brought clarity to the accounts, meticulously preparing balance sheets and statements of financial affairs. The Chairman at the time, Tom Gladwin, recalls that David was well informed in financial matters and proved meticulous, thorough and an excellent communicator.

During David’s tenure as Hon. Treasurer, Michael Casement was Hon. Secretary during 1996–2004 and then Chairman until 2009. He shared Tom Gladwin’s gratitude for David’s professional and timely handling of the BOC accounts. He writes, ‘I was aware that David was exceptionally busy, and was deeply involved with the London Natural History Society, also the BTO [British Trust for Ornithology] and RSPB [Royal Society for the Protection of Birds]. But he was also a close friend, and we often met at BOU and BTO annual meetings. He was proud of his Huguenot ancestry, and often shared memories with my wife, who also had Huguenot links. We continued to keep in close touch with David and Mary when they regularly came to meetings at the Barley Mow. I join with many others who will miss him deeply.’

David’s passion for birdwatching was a central part of his life. He joined the London Natural History Society (LNHS) in 1961 and served a two-year term as chair of the Ornithology Section (1973–74). He was also a member of their Research Sub-Committee, of which he was secretary for five years. David was the London Regional Representative of the BTO, as well as being a member of the RSPB, Wildfowl Trust, and Kent Trust for Nature Conservation.

David edited the first *Atlas of breeding birds of the London area* (1977), which became a seminal work on the topic and established the baseline for all of the subsequent atlases. He became President of the LNHS in 1980 and from 1991 its Ornithology Indoor Meetings Secretary and Editor of the *Ornithology Bulletin*. He was a keen and assiduous member of the Administration and Finance Committee, always vetting the accounts pre-publication. He was Vice President of LNHS during 1995–2021 and thereafter an Hon. Vice-President.

Apart from LNHS, his other main ornithological connection was with the BTO. He served on its Council for seven years in the late 1970s/1980s, spending his last four years as Hon. Treasurer. His participation in BTO surveys was immense. He made many submissions to the Breeding Bird Survey (6,912 individual observations); the Wetland Bird Survey; and the Bird Atlas 2007–11 (1,437 submissions involving 2,616 individual observations).

His local birding activities are best illustrated by his regular reports in the annual systematic lists published in the London Bird Report from 1961. We all have our favourite birding spots. For David, it was Swanscombe Marsh in north Kent, which is now threatened with development. In 1966 David's organisational skills came to the fore when he organised the National Enquiry into the breeding distribution of Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* and Barn Owl *Tyto alba* for the entire London area. A rarity came his way when, in 1976, a male Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* at Darrick Wood, Orpington was accepted as the first in the 20th century for the London area. David was chair of the London Bird Club from November 1972 to November 1974.

David was a devoted uncle to his nephew Giles, who lost his father at an early age, and was a supportive and kind godfather to his godchildren. While a private man, he had a dry sense of humour and was always unfailingly polite and respectful to everyone he met.

Deeply proud of his Huguenot heritage, he was an active member of the Huguenot Society where he served as chair of the Finance and Administration Committee for many years. David and Mary attended many Huguenot Society events, and his passion for ancestry inspired his godson to write his university thesis on the Huguenots.

In 2020, David was diagnosed with cancer. He faced the disease with remarkable fortitude enduring challenging treatments without complaint, even when they affected his speech and ability to eat and drink. He is survived by Mary who he married in 1960. With his passing the world of ornithology loses a huge driving force.

Stephen Chapman & Andrew Evans

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### Friends of the BOC

The BOC has since 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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).