

Meeting Minutes 28 May 2022

<i>Meeting Title</i>	BirdLife Australia 2022 Annual General Meeting
<i>Date & Time</i>	9.30am, Saturday, 28 May 2022
<i>Location</i>	National Officer, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton, Vic, 3053
<i>Present</i>	18 voting members
<i>Apologies</i>	Judith Hoyle, Philip Moors, Hugh Possingham, Judith Rawlins, Alanna Vivian
<i>Proxies Received</i>	Valid proxies were received from 243 members

1. Welcome

The President, Martine Maron, opened the meeting and welcomed members and supporters who were attending at National Office and who were watching the 2022 Annual General Meeting of BirdLife Australia via the livestream webinar. She acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land.

There being a quorum, the meeting was declared open at 9.30am.

For the record, the Chair noted that this AGM will be a different type of meeting from those normally conducted by BirdLife Australia. With the continuing uncertainty around the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Board asked members to participate in the AGM on the same basis as last year, by completing a proxy form. The Board asked that those proxy forms should be given to the Chair.

The Board supported the proxy approach by establishing an AGM section on the BirdLife Australia website, as well as a designated email address where members could email in or post their own questions related to the business of the AGM, including questions to the Auditor, the Board or senior management.

Where possible, answers were provided on the website before this AGM for all members to see. Questions received immediately before the AGM will have the answers provided on the website in the days following the AGM.

The Chair reported that 243 of BirdLife's members had agreed to participate by proxy. Comments from members continue to be extremely positive with members understanding the difficult circumstances under which the AGM needed to be conducted.

In their proxies, members directed the Chair how to vote on each matter to be resolved, including adoption of the Financial Accounts, the Auditors' Report and the Annual Report. Members also sent in their votes for the election of three Directors, as well as for the Fellows and Honorary Life Members.

The Chair affirmed that all member proxy votes would be included in the conduct of the AGM.

2. Meeting Apologies

Apologies were received from Judith Hoyle, Philip Moors, Hugh Possingham, Judith Rawlins and Alanna Vivian.

3. Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting held on 29 May 2021

The minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting held on 29 May 2021 were published on the BirdLife Australia website and available to members on request.

The count of proxy votes were in favour of accepting the minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting.

The Chair **moved** the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 29 May 2021 be adopted as a true and correct record of that meeting, **seconded** Duncan MacKenzie.

Carried

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. Presentation of the Annual Report of Directors for the year ended 31 December 2021

The Annual Report was available to all members on the AGM section the BirdLife Australia website and available on request.

The President thanked fellow Directors and acknowledged the work they all do and their committed to the success of the organisation and the achievement of BirdLife's goals.

BirdLife marked 120 years since a group of amateur ornithologists came together to form a national ornithological union. Much has changed over this period, but the focus on science and people to conserve birds remains the same.

The Board works with the CEO to define the strategy needed to achieve the objectives set out in BirdLife's Constitution. In response to Australia's alarming loss of biodiversity, BirdLife will be launching an ambitious 10-year Bird Conservation Strategy to stop bird extinctions and reverse population declines.

The Board also oversees implementation of the strategy, to put in place the necessary finance and governance structures and consider corporate risk. BirdLife's finances and management controls are strong.

Despite the challenges facing our birds, it is an exciting time for BirdLife's members and supporters. Conservation works when it is properly resourced and led by the expertise our organisation collectively holds. BirdLife is better placed than ever before to bring about the future we want.

The Chair introduced the Board members attending the meeting and acknowledged Board members who were not able to attend.

She thanked CEO, Paul Sullivan, his Leadership Team, and all BirdLife staff and volunteers for their dedication and hard work through this challenging time.

The count of proxy votes were in favour of accepting the Annual Report of Directors.

The Chair **moved** the 2021 Annual Report of Directors be adopted **seconded** Gerard Early.

Carried

5. Presentation of the Financial Accounts of the Company and the Auditors' Report for the year ended 31 December 2021

Gary Nelson, Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee, presented the Financial Accounts and the Auditors' Report for 2021 on behalf of the Board.

A concise Income and Expenditure Statement and Balance Sheet was published in the Annual Report and full copies of the Financial Accounts were published on the BirdLife Australia website and available on request.

The Consolidated Financial Statements for BirdLife Australia includes the operating results for the National Office, the BirdLife Network of branches, special interest groups, reserves and observatories and the Australian Bird Environment Foundation. The Australian Bird Environment Foundation was wound up in November 2021 with all assets and liabilities transferred to BirdLife Australia.

The external auditor, RSM, provided an unqualified opinion that BirdLife's financial statements are fairly and appropriately presented, without any identified exceptions, and in compliance with accepted accounting principles.

Revenue in 2021 increased to \$16.1m against \$12.8m in 2020. Excluding the movement in fair value of investments and 2020 government pandemic response funding, revenue increased to \$14.1m against \$10.1m in 2020. This includes significant bequests received and strong donations performance.

As at 31 December 2021 return on investments was \$1.97m.

Total expenditure increased to \$11.2m. Administration costs increased to 17% including 5% due to one-off costs associated with the Digital Engagement Project.

The operating surplus is \$4.1m compared to \$2.9m in 2020.

Net assets remain strong at \$20.4m, an increase from \$16.3m in 2020. The value of investments is \$17.3m and cash on hand \$4.5m. Liabilities reduced by \$0.3m as projects deferred due to COVID-19 were delivered. Cash reserves remain strong in National Office operations and across the Network.

The Chair **moved** the Financial Accounts and the Auditors' Report for the year ending 31 December 2021 be adopted, **seconded** Jarrod Pittson. **Carried**

6. Presentation of BirdLife's achievements in 2021

Chief Executive Officer, Paul Sullivan, addressed the meeting and presented on BirdLife's Australia's achievements in 2021 and plans for the future. Highlights in 2021 included:

- BirdLife celebrated 120 years of bird research and conservation and continues to adapt to the challenges, particularly in the context of an extinction crisis.
- The BirdLife family also celebrated other milestones in 2021, including:
 - BirdLife Tasmania celebrated 50 years of fighting for Tassie's birds;
 - AWSG celebrated 40 years of shorebird expeditions to north-west WA;
 - community groups returned to face-to-face meetings and saving birds;
 - 70 people attended the Farewell Shorebirds event with BirdLife Top End; and
 - 182 volunteers planted 2,500 trees and shrubs in the Capertee Valley with BirdLife Southern NSW.
- Toondah Harbour: Board director Judith Hoyle spoke (by video) about community opposition to the proposed destruction of a Ramsar wetland at Toondah to build apartments.
- BirdLife+NSW Farmers Federation collaborated to stop the NSW Government's planned use of second generation anti-coagulant rodenticides (SGARs) to address

the mouse plague. BirdLife also campaigned for retailers such as Bunnings to take bird-killing SGARs off their shelves and embrace nature-friendly business practices.

- BirdLife Australia's work to document the Outstanding Universal Values of the Geum Estuary in RoK, and the advocacy across the BirdLife partnership, resulted in a World Heritage listing in the Yellow Sea.
- Western Ground Parrots are vulnerable to fire in the Cape Arid National Park. A partnership with the WA Government and Friends of the Western Ground Parrot trialed a wild-to-wild translocation of seven birds fitted with transmitters at a remote location east of Albany. Planning is now underway for a new self-sustaining population. This work was funded by the Australian Government and BirdLife's donors.
- BirdLife is working to hold Adani and the Queensland Government accountable to Black-throated Finch conservation. The state government ignored its own independent scientific panel and Adani is ignoring its obligation to work with the recovery team.
- BirdLife Australia continues to work on bushfire impacted birds across NSW, East Gippsland and Kangaroo Island, including birds like the Eastern Bristlebird. BirdLife has installed sound recorders to map Eastern Bristlebird habitat and better target conservation efforts, such as restoration.
- Birds on Farms staff are working with farmers to support biodiversity on productive farms. This is a project primarily underwritten by philanthropy.
- The captive release of 58 Regent Honeyeaters in the Hunter Valley was a success.
- BirdLife collaborated with Professor Stephen Garnett and researchers to publish an updated Action Plan for Australian Birds (December 2021). The Action Plan examines the extinction risk facing the almost 1,300 birds in Australia. Up to 216 Australian birds are now threatened – compared with 195 a decade ago.
- To raise awareness of those threatened birds, BirdLife collaborated with the Bowerbird Collective, David Stewart of Nature Sound, Charles Darwin University and Mervyn Street of Mangkaja Arts. *Songs of Disappearance* reached #2 in the ARIA album charts.
- BirdLife will soon launch a new 10 year strategy with real ambition and leadership to reverse bird population declines. It is based on four pillars – species, sites, systems and society. We know what to do, we have the ability to reverse the extinction crisis, we need leadership from government and business on nature laws, nature positive policies and investment in threatened species recovery.
- BirdLife also plans to launch a new website and Customer Relationship Management System to better communicate and engage with our 300,000 plus supporters.

The CEO thanked BirdLife's supporters for their continued passion and commitment to save our precious native birds.

7. Declaration of the Election of Directors

As Martine Maron and Vice-President, Amanda Bamford, were nominees for re-election, the Chair was passed to Gary Nelson, Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee.

All eligible voting members were notified and invited to submit nominations to the Board through the member magazine, *Australian Birdlife*, and on the BirdLife Australia website.

The Chair **noted** that there were three vacancies on the Board. Nominations were received from Amanda Bamford, Gerard Early and Martine Maron.

The number of candidates nominating for the position of Director did not exceed the number of vacancies and proxies received were for the unopposed re-election of the candidates.

The Chair **moved** that Amanda Bamford, Gerard Early and Martine Maron be elected to the Board for a three-year term commencing from the closure of today's Annual General meeting, **seconded** Duncan MacKenzie. **Carried**

Having been re-elected, the chair was passed back to Martine Maron.

8. Election of Fellows and Honorary Life Members

The Chair noted that under the BirdLife Australia Constitution, persons can be elected by the members on the recommendation of the Board as either Honorary Life Members or Fellows of BirdLife Australia. Over the past year, the Board had carried out a rigorous process involving nominations from members, the Research & Conservation Committee and the Community Grants & Awards Committee. As a result, the Board recommended that members should elect Kate Buchanan and Hugh Ford as Fellows and Pat Bingham and Graham Harrington as Honorary Life Members.

The proposed citations had been posted to members when they received the AGM documentation and available on the BirdLife Australia website.

Following a count of proxy votes, the Chair announced that Kate Buchanan and Hugh Ford had been elected as Fellows and Pat Bingham and Graham Harrington had been elected Honorary Life Membership.

The Chair congratulated the new Fellows and Honorary Life Members and thanked them for their distinguished service.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 the 2020 and 2021 Fellows and Honorary Life Members were announced remotely so it was not possible to formally present their certificates. Both Gerard Early and Kate Ravich attended the 2022 AGM and were presented with their certificates.

Mike Bamford was elected as a Fellow at the 2020 AGM and his citation previously read. As he was also unable to attend the 2022 AGM in person but was attending the webinar the President formally congratulated him.

9. Announcement of BirdLife Australia Awards

The DL Serventy Medal acknowledges outstanding contribution made to Australasian ornithology on an assessment of the nominee's published scientific contribution to Australasian ornithology.

The JN Hobbs Memorial Medal is awarded to an amateur ornithologist who has made a significant contribution to the knowledge or conservation of birds in Australia.

Nominations are made by members of BirdLife Australia and are considered and recommended by the Scientific Awards Committee and the Research & Conservation Committee before being approved by the Board. These awards are made by the Board and do not require confirmation by members.

The Chair announced that Eric Woehler was awarded the Serventy Medal and Jon Coleman was awarded the JN Hobbs Memorial Medal.

The President congratulated Eric and Jon for their very well deserved recognition.

BirdLife Australia Distinguished Service Awards acknowledge the enormous contribution made by members to BirdLife Australia and its predecessor organisations. Nominations for the awards must be made by three financial members of BirdLife Australia and are considered and recommended by the Community Grants & Awards Committee before being approved by the Board. These awards are made by the Board and do not require confirmation by members.

The recipients of the 2022 BirdLife Australia Distinguished Service Awards were Debbie Harris, BirdLife Southern NSW; Elisabeth Karplus, NSW Key Biodiversity Area Co-ordinator, Guardian for South-West Slopes KBA, and Alma de Rebeira, Eyre Bird Observatory.

The physical presentation of the award certificates would be made at suitable events.

The President congratulated Debbie, Elisabeth and Alma for their very well deserved recognition.

10. Questions and other matters from members submitted by proxy

The Chair noted that, under the Constitution, the Annual General Meeting can only deal with matters for which 28 days' notice has been given. For this current meeting, no such notice has been given.

The Chair also noted that all questions raised by members before the AGM, together with the answers provided, will be put on the AGM section of the BirdLife Australia website shortly after the AGM and therefore are available to all members.

There was no other business.

The President thanked everyone who participated in the AGM by proxy, those who attended on the day and those who attended via BirdLife's livestream webinar. She also thanked everyone behind the scenes for their help with organising the AGM and the livestream webinar.

As there was no other business the President declared the 2022 BirdLife Australia Annual General Meeting closed at 10.40am.

Signed:



..... **(Chairman)** **Date:** 8 June 2023