

British Birds

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'BB' goes independent



This is, perhaps, the most important editorial in the journal's 74-year history. We hope that all subscribers will read it

Since its inception, *British Birds* has been run by a commercial publishing firm: first by H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd and, since 1st April 1973, by Macmillan Journals Ltd. Now, as from 1st August 1980, the journal is completely independent and will be run by the present editorial board (Stanley Cramp, Peter Grant, Malcolm Ogilvie and Tim Sharrock). The new company will be on a non-profit basis: if any surplus is achieved, it will be devoted to providing a better journal.

Macmillan Journals Ltd were good publishers for *BB* and in many ways we regret leaving that happy stable. Relations remain most amicable, and we shall, indeed, be retaining some of our links with the Macmillan organisation, as we hope the occasional book will visibly demonstrate.

With a circulation increase from 3,400 in 1976 to over 8,000 at the end of 1979, we believed that the journal could not be in a healthier state. Financially, however, this was not the case. As part of a large company,

with high overheads, the journal was losing several tens of thousands of pounds a year. To make the journal viable, it would have been necessary, for instance, to reduce at once the number of pages per issue by 20% and to increase the price by, perhaps, 70%. This simultaneous lowering of standards and huge increase in price clearly spelt potential disaster.

We decided, therefore, to take up the Macmillan offer for us to purchase the journal. Run independently, with minimal overheads, we believe that we can not only keep price increases much lower, but also currently maintain and in the long term improve the journal's size and quality.

We do, however, start with a disadvantage, for, although $\frac{7}{12}$ ths of the way through this year, we have less than $\frac{5}{12}$ ths of the year's subscription income with which to produce the last five issues and an index.

We must now rely wholly on our subscribers' loyalty—your loyalty—to see us through this critical period. Even if your subscription is not yet due, please help our current financial problems by resubscribing now—in advance of your usual renewal date—using the form in the centre of this issue (where you can indicate the month when your subscription will start). Those who feel that they cannot help us in this way will get their renewal reminders as usual.

We shall continue to provide good issues but, inevitably, must at once raise the subscription rates, although we have decided to make no change in the concessionary rate to up-and-coming birdwatchers who are members of the RSPB's Young Ornithologists' Club.

	New annual subscription, including index
Member of YOC	£6.50
Member of a bird club in special reduced subscription scheme (see p. v)	£12.00
Ordinary rate UK & Ireland	£16.00
Overseas rates	See inside front cover

On the editorial side, we plan almost no changes, except to publish rather more papers rather more quickly. Our aim in running *BB* from now on will be to provide the best possible journal for the lowest economic price: a journal which is independent and run for the benefit of ornithology and not for profit. We need your trust, understanding and help to achieve this. Please resubscribe. Please bear with us if there are delays or other inefficiencies during the next few months, which will be very hectic for us. Please tell your friends about *BB* and help us to increase the number of subscribers even more.

We repeat our plea. The future of *British Birds* is in your hands. Please help us to ensure its continuation by resubscribing now.

STANLEY CRAMP, PETER GRANT, MALCOLM OGILVIE
and J. T. R. SHARROCK