

Obituaries

Christopher John Naylor (1961–2019)

Chris Naylor was a man of science and Christian faith, the founder and leader (with his wife, Susanna) of A Rocha's work in Lebanon for 12 years. He felt a call, 'to write the gospel in the landscape' and succeeded, despite the challenges in a land that had recently emerged from civil war. Under his leadership, Aammiq Wetland, the fast-shrinking, but biggest and most biodiverse freshwater site in Lebanon, was restored and enlarged and he organised nationwide field-work, which resulted in the declaration of 11 new Important Bird Areas and an impressive ornithological database. In 2001 his team revived the national ringing scheme, which had lapsed in the early 1970s.

After returning to England, in 2010 Chris became Executive Director of A Rocha International. He and Susanna, and A

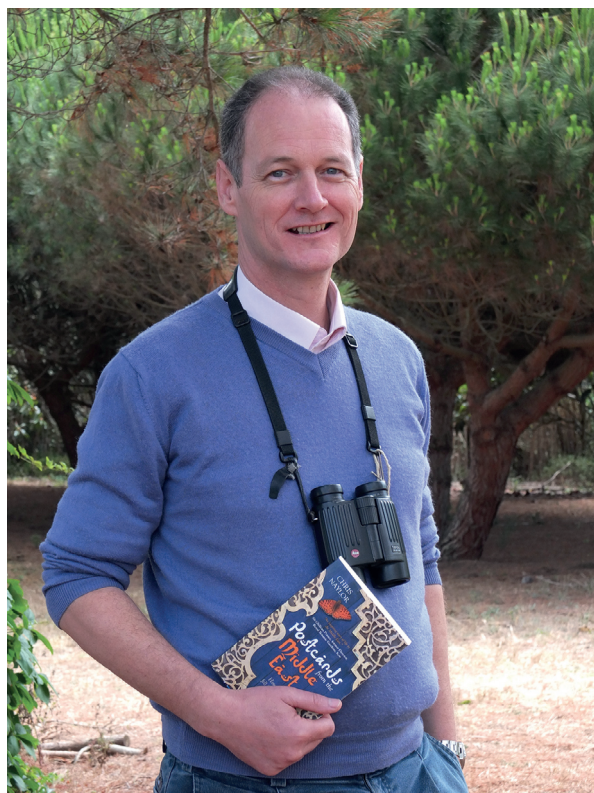
Rocha's co-founder, Miranda Harris, died in a car accident on 28th October 2019 whilst visiting A Rocha South Africa.

Chris was uniquely equipped to lead by his training, experience and character. With a Masters in Natural Sciences from Cambridge University, and ten years as a science teacher in the UK, Kuwait and Lebanon, he was a superb communicator and determined that A Rocha's projects would be undergirded by high-quality research. Prior to studying Arabic in Jordan, Chris and Susanna took a course in cross-cultural mission at Redcliffe Bible College, preparing them well for the multi-ethnic Middle East and A Rocha's global work.

Chris's visits to A Rocha national organisations were eagerly anticipated, because, as he once said to me, 'I know how it feels when

the team is small, the funding is low and yet the opportunities are abundant.' He prioritised practical conservation, resisting any drift towards general environmentalism. He also encouraged research, which had been so fruitful in Lebanon, where his team (among many studies and surveys) had proven first breeding for Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, Garganey *Spatula querquedula*, Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*, Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cinctura*, Desert Lark *A. deserti* and Streaked Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta*. He also had a passion for environmental education, having seen its impact on thousands of students at Aammiq.

I leave the last words to Richard Storey, a hydrology graduate who volunteered with A Rocha Lebanon for two years: 'You managed to be at once my boss, big brother and friend. I remember your calmness in situations that were far from calm, your patience with people who let you down, and your perse-



Melissa Ong

61. Chris Naylor, with his book, *Postcards from the Middle East*, in 2015. www.arocha.org/en/resources/postcards-from-the-middle-east

verance on a road that was more difficult and dangerous than ordinary people would manage. The way you guided a family and a team of foreigners through all this are still a marvel to me. And your integrity, love and trust in God have remained with me... you've continued to be one of my heroes as you used

those same qualities to lead a global movement.'

A longer obituary for Chris Naylor appears in *Sandgrouse* and there is more at www.arochoa.org/en/people/chris-naylor

Barbara Mearns

Rodney Paul Martins (1957–2019)

Rod Martins, who died in May 2019, was an exceptional field observer, a world birder and a conservationist, who first came to prominence as a young birder from the 'oil boom generation' of Shetland birders from the 1970s. Born and bred in Norfolk (and proud to tell anyone who would listen to that fact), Rod made his home city of Norwich the base for the majority of his life, interspersed with lengthy foreign trips to all corners of the globe – he was one of the first 'world birders'. Rod was one of the most widely travelled birders of his generation and an ornithological pioneer in many respects, making visits to places that many birders nowadays take for granted. For example, his trip to Thailand in 1978 blazed a birding trail across the country that many hundreds of birders have subsequently benefited from.

Following a degree in geography from Leicester University, Rod's strong inclination for travel and his desire to go birding precluded much opportunity for formal employment, although he worked as a bird tour guide during the early part of his career. At that time, Rod was a leading British birder, one of the first to see 400 species in Britain, which included finding a first for Britain (Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia ruppeli*, on Shetland in 1977; *Brit. Birds* 74: 279–283), but it was his depth of knowledge (gained through voracious reading and study) and his development of a wide social network of birding contacts that marked him out.

Rod was instrumental in helping to establish the 'regional' bird clubs – the African Bird Club (ABC), Neotropical Bird Club (NBC), Ornithological Society for the Middle East (OSME) and the Oriental Bird Club (OBC). During this period, he also played a significant role in helping to unravel the ornithology of the Middle East, specifically Yemen, a country of which he was profoundly fond. Rod was a key member of the inaugural 1985 OSME Ornithological Expedition to north Yemen, spending eight weeks in the field studying Yemen's bird communities, threatened species and endemics. In spring 1993, he was again a full-time member of the second OSME Expedition to Yemen, this time including a visit to Socotra, which he would have savoured as a connoisseur of islands and their endemics. He visited Socotra again in



62. Rod Martins (and a Southern Cassowary *Casuarius casuarius*), Mission Beach, Queensland, Australia, October 2007.

Duncan Brooks