

# Remembering David Fisher (1954–2021)

Raymond Jeffers and Chris Balchin

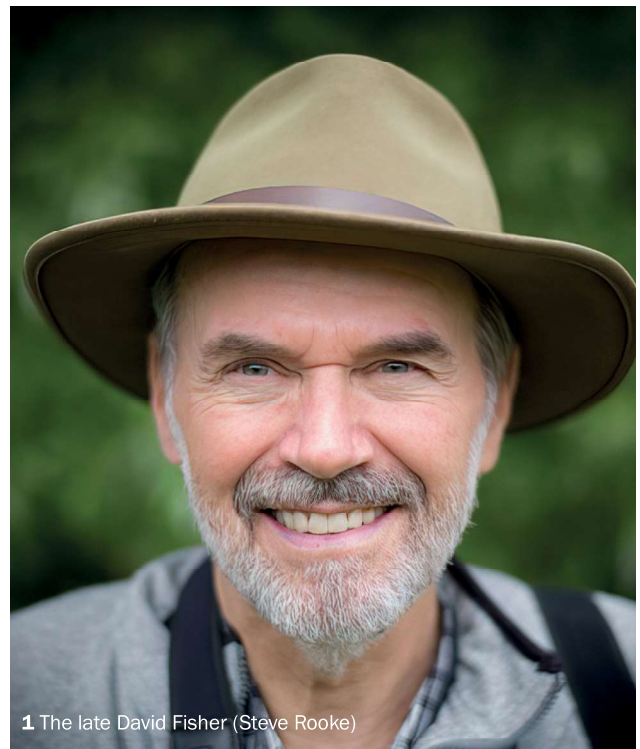
Two friends of the late David Fisher share memories of this well-known world birder, tour leader, conservationist and twice Chairman of NBC.

**O**n 22 May 2021 [Raymond Jeffers writes] the birding family lost a tireless supporter of birding and conservation. It is no exaggeration to say that David Fisher had devoted the whole of his adult life to birds. The seed had been planted when, as a schoolboy growing up in the Welsh capital of Cardiff (UK), he had flushed a Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* from under a bridge and was instantly hooked by nature's beauty. Next stop was tertiary education at Weymouth College (Dorset, UK) allowing him to start an English bird list. Soon his insatiable appetite for more birds demanded traversing the English Channel on a 2,000-mile road trip that ultimately reached a Turkish raptor watchpoint.

David was now on his way but there was the small matter of getting a job. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB, the UK's leading bird-conservation organisation) engaged him as a warden. He was grateful for that and the invaluable insight it gave him into how a passion could become a profession. Still, the travel bug remained. The logical step was overseas tour leading. His keen eye, communication skills, depth of birding knowledge and unending patience with less-gifted birders made him a natural.

Back then international bird tourism was in its infancy but David had the courage and foresight to be not only a paid guide but also a 'bird' businessman: those days in Weymouth, when he had reluctantly gone to class rather than out birding, were starting to pay dividends. In 1982 David became managing director of Sunbird, a post he held until 2001. Through his immaculate trip planning, ability to pick a talented team and attention to each participant's wants, it is no surprise that under his tenure Sunbird was repeatedly voted by clients one of the best UK bird-tour operators. On stepping down as MD he remained a director and senior tour leader for the company.

However, there was so much more to David than his 'day' job. Amongst many other roles, he was a rare bird committee member and chair (such



1 The late David Fisher (Steve Rooke)

as, for the Seychelles), an editor (for example, for the Ornithological Society of the Middle East), an article writer (including in *Neotropical Birding*: Fisher 2006, 2020), accomplished bird photographer (with his photos routinely appearing in this magazine, including on the cover of *Neotropical Birding* 17), financial donor and a font of everything bird-wise. He visited around a hundred countries and all seven continents. The 'bird continent' of South America was his true love. Accordingly, he served two distinguished terms as Chairman of the Neotropical Bird Club (2009–11 and 2015–21). Typically, he threw his energies into leading an organisation devoted to raising funds for small conservation projects.