SDOS User Group Guidelines

Introduction

The SDOS User Group is a "Discussion Group", enabling 'subscribers' (i.e. SDOS members subscribed to the group) to share information by e-mail on topics of interest.
Subscribers will also receive indoor and outdoor event reminders and occasional special notices.
Anyone who subscribes can send a message to all other subscribers by e-mailing sdos@groups.io.

A Discussion Group differs from the well-known social media platforms, such as Facebook, in several important respects:

- It is a private group, not a public one, restricted only to SDOS Members
- Only name and email address are required, no other personal details are stored.
- Messages (posts) are distributed by email, and a special Application is not required.

The SDOS User Group is hosted by a company called 'Groups.io'.

Messages posted to the SDOS User Group are not filtered or monitored before distribution, so for our Group to be informative, interesting, relevant and concise we rely on subscribers observing the following guidelines:

Message Content Guidance

- As a local ornithological society, generally the most relevant messages are about birds and birding in our local area. Examples are sightings, ringing reports, identification problems, habitats and conservation projects.

- At times, posts about general nature and the environment, including mammals, reptiles, insects, plants and trees can be of interest to many of our members.

- While the focus is generally our local area, User Group posts can at times be from further afield, even international, provided the content is likely to be of interest to many of our members.

- Ecologically sensitive information relating to the location of vulnerable species MUST NOT be divulged.

- Posts can include photo attachments, ideally good-quality images. Please only share low quality images if relevant, e.g. a record shot of an unusual sighting. Please avoid sending several similar images; aim for each photo to show something different.

- User Group is not ideal for sharing videos due to their large file size. If you wish to share a video consider uploading it to one of the file-sharing sites, for example We Transfer, obtain a link, then insert the link into your posts.

- Members may post details of birding-related equipment, books etc. which are in their possession and wish to sell or dispose of.

- Any post which might result in members making financial payments to third parties must first be referred to SDOS Council (council@sdos.org) with details of the proposed message. (*see Note 1 below)*

- Messages must not be copied and distributed outside SDOS without the express permission of the originator. For example, it is not acceptable for a member to copy and paste another member's User Group message to social media accounts such as Shoreham Birding, Sussex Birders, Henfield Birding etc, without permission from the originator. The above list of social media accounts is illustrative and not exhaustive.

While it is relatively easy to define the scope of User Group discussions it is less easy to define what might be unacceptable to subscribers. So please remember:

◆ Every 'post' sent to sdos@groups.io automatically sends an email to all subscribers. Therefore, posts must not be sent which others may consider 'off-topic', liable to cause offence to an individual or group of members or are of a party-political nature.

◆ Whilst it is OK to disagree respectfully with others' viewpoints, posts should avoid direct contradiction or being excessively disputatious or inflammatory.

◆ Where you wish to refer to relevant content on a website or on social media, please DO NOT repost the content - add a link instead.

◆ SDOS Council has a nominated group of moderators.
All posts about campaigns, petitions etc., whether organised by individuals or groups, must be referred to SDOS Council by email (council@sdos.org). SDOS Chair will assign the review to one or more of the Moderators as necessary. SDOS Council's decision is final.

◆ Commercial advertising is not permitted under any circumstances.

Advice and Complaints

◆ If you are unsure whether the topic of a post meets these guidelines, or if you wish to complain about a post, please contact SDOS Council (council@sdos.org)

User Group Membership

◆ SDOS members who wish to subscribe to the User Group will be sent an invitation by e-mail. By replying to the invitation, the member agrees to their email address being held securely by Groups.io (see GDPR Compliance Policy).

◆ Subscribers may, if they wish, register on the groups.io website. By doing so in addition to managing messages, the photo gallery can be viewed.

◆ Subscribers will then receive 'posts' by other members and can reply either to all group members or only to the sender.

◆ The preferred way of replying to a post is to use a link at the bottom of the message, rather than the ones you usually use for your general emails.

◆ Please note that 'Reply to Group' should only be used if you want all subscribers to read your reply, otherwise 'Reply to Sender' from the links at the bottom of the message should be used.

Moderation

◆ Posts submitted to the User Group are sent without prior approval or moderation. Therefore, it is important subscribers check their drafts before sending to ensure the content is correct and in compliance with these guidelines.

◆ SDOS Council reserve the right to:
- remove any post recipients might find offensive in any way or flouts these guidelines
- remove a subscriber from the group if the subscriber's email is a source of a virus
- remove a subscriber who persistently flouts these guidelines

Additional Notes

Note 1: SDOS Council wants to prevent members receiving unwanted requests for payments such as donations to charities or 'crowdfunding' projects. If any such posts are approved a disclaimer will be required, stating that "By allowing this post SDOS is neither indicating its support, nor encouraging members to make payments, and accepts no responsibility for a member's decision to make a payment."