

## **RSPB Target Breeds Zoom Meetings - 26<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2020. Some Notes.**

1. We all want to secure 'our beloved breed' for future generations. The Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RSPB) have done this for cattle, ponies, goats etc. - and they have helped the Andalusian breed to do the same. They have now targeted six other British ex-commercial poultry breeds who have shown interest, and want to help them to do the same:

Spanish, North Holland Blues, Marsh Daisies, Norfolk Greys, Old English Pheasant Fowl and Campines.

2. There was a face-to-face meeting at Stoneleigh to explore possibilities back in 2018 – and in our present zoom world it seemed sensible to revive the initiative by setting up a series of Zoom Meetings – which we did during the last week of October. Of course we should have all been getting ready for the National, but I guess this was better than nothing! Professor Philippe Wilson, our RPS Chairperson, and now Director of Conservation at the RBST, was there to talk to us and to answer our questions, and very lucid he was.

3. Three of the meetings were extremely positive and were followed up by further breed zoom meetings later in the week. The other three breeds will I am sure come on board with this way of keeping in touch when we are more familiar with the ups and downs of zoom! And meanwhile we do still have the telephone ....

4. As a result of these meetings the breeds do now realise that survival is all about genetics; and do now accept that we have got to ring/wing-tag/mark our breeding birds so that they can be securely identified – not least by DEFRA if there is a further outbreak of Avian Flu. All agreed that the wing-tag issue needs to be finalised by the Poultry Society of GB asap.

5. When we have done that, the RBST is minded to set up a Poultry link with Cloud-Lines, and then hold our hands to help us feed in the data, so that we can then produce a 'family-tree' pedigree certificate for our birds. And that will be a good secure platform from which to ensure the survival of 'our breed'.

6. Getting dedicated breeders is a problem for all of us. Philippe underlined that what we needed were breeders for whom 'our breed' was 'the breed of preference' – or even better their only breed. They are the ones who can be activated to support 'The Project'.

7. If we are to secure 'our breed' we shall also need to reach out beyond the showing community to the sort of people who 'want a few chickens' but would also like to help the cause of 'conservation'. And these people will want to know whether 'our breed' – which was 'created' to fill a utility market - is still a utility breed. Do they lay eggs and do they taste of something on the table. Philippe asked us whether we were breeding for utility or for looks – and how did that affect what birds we used in our breeding pens? Good question.

8. The RBST is minded to produce a short leaflet for use with these 'new' breeders in mind for each of our breeds.. They have draft versions of these leaflets on file, but they need to be brought up to date and checked by new Registrars.

Andrew Bowden – 30/10/20