

**Saw Mill River Audubon – Draft Board Meeting Minutes
May 2, 2005 – Chappaqua Library**

Present: Robert McCrillis, presiding, Jim Anderson, Cori Cumming, Tom McEnerney, Sophie Keyes, Burt Leiser, Margo Peters, Jeanne Romeu, Richard Saravay, George Shakespear, Ponie Sheehan, Chris Slagle, Meredith Smith, Anne Swaim, Education Director, Rita Wecker, and Stan Wecker.

Minutes of April 4, 2005: Karen Wells is hosting the upcoming annual picnic, but not departing from the board. Margo Peters had volunteered to join the Bird Seed Committee at the April meeting. Margo Peters moved that minutes be approved as amended; Jeanne Romeu seconded. Motion carried.

President's Report:

Rick Renz, who was on the approved slate of new directors, has regretfully declined the honor due to conflicting commitments. He will, however, continue as a volunteer and serve on the Bird Seed Committee.

Substantial updates to the SMRA Directors' Handbooks were circulated to existing directors and complete sets to new ones, thanks to a special effort by Sophie Keyes and Ellen Heidelberger. Sophie thanked Ellen for her efforts, including coming to the office on a Saturday to complete the production.

Robert asked that all Board members review the Board roster and their own individual information. Any changes should be sent to Ellen's attention at the SMRA office.

Correspondence: Andrew Spano, Westchester County Executive, wrote a follow-up letter on the deer hunting season, noting that the Department of Environmental Conservation had voted to keep the current October 15 start date.

The Federated Conservationists of Westchester County announced a meeting for June 9.

Robert McCrillis attended the land management conference organized by the Nature Conservancy on Thursday, April 28. Representatives of the Westchester Land Trust, Teatown Reservation, and other groups also attended.

Directors were asked to propose names of volunteers to invite to the annual Board picnic.

On May 14, River Rats Training will be held at Lenoir Preserve in Yonkers, which trains volunteers to restore habitats and increase biodiversity along the Saw Mill River.

On May 15, there will be a Spring Celebration at Rockefeller State Park, at which the Rockefeller preserve will be named an Important Bird Area and a new fern garden will be dedicated. Anne Swaim will circulate an email to the Board, to solicit names of those interested in attending and to reply to Rockefeller State Park for the organization as a group.

On May 16, an Important Bird Area Book Launch press event will be held at Constitution Marsh.

SMRA representatives are encouraged to attend all the above events.

Community Relations and Development: The annual fund drive has raised \$9,169 to date. This year's goal is \$14,500, up from the \$11,713 total raised in 2004

As of May 2, membership is up to a total of 789, a nice jump.

Chapter memberships to date in 2005 are at \$1,140.

Environmental Action: Chris Slagle has agreed to become the chair of the committee, and is also the contact to New York State Audubon. Richard Saravay proposed that the entire Board get the Audubon Action notices sent by the State organization; this will be discussed by the Environmental Committee. An anti-development group has formed at Tarrytown Lakes; Chris Slagle will follow-up with them.

Naturalist's Report: Anne Swaim reported that this is the busy season of the year, with field trips and classroom sessions on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through the rest of the school year. Scout groups as well as school groups are active.

Next Saturday, there will be a birding breakfast at Van Cortlandt Manor. The breakfast is 18th century style and requires pre-registration with Van Cortlandt Manor. It will be followed by a bird walk.

Bird sightings: Baltimore orioles are back at Pruyn. Anne notes that orioles have individually distinctive song patterns, and the Pruyn individual has displayed the same pattern now for four years. Chris Slagle noted a wood thrush at Brinton Brook, and Margo Peters a pileated woodpecker in her own yard.

Finances:

Treasurer's Report—Tom McEnerney reported on operating revenues and expenses for the four months ended April 30, 2005. Total revenues for the four months are \$15,399, slightly under the planned budget. Membership and education program fees are both lower than projected, perhaps due to their cyclical nature. Total expenses for the four months are \$44,427, higher than the \$39,053 plan. Expenses are running over due to annual benefits payments being due in a lump sum early in the year, plus postage and printing costs associated with the annual fund drive. Pruy House and bulletin expenses are also over plan.

Robert McCrillis noted that operating monies were being taken from the investment portfolio, but that this is a controlled amount and consistent with the organization's mission to run programs, rather than simply to grow its investments.

Investments—Rita Wecker presented a quarterly report for the SMRA investment portfolio performance for the quarter ended March 31, 2005. Final balance at quarter end was \$864,206, down 1.2%. The S&P 500 index was down 2.2% for the same period.

Rita reported that the Domini Fund is not performing well, and that the Finance Committee has decided to sell our investment in it and will probably purchase shares in the Pax Worldwide Fund instead. She expects to report further on this action in September.

One of the SMRA nine-month CDs matures over the summer. The committee will determine what to do with the investment.

Rita also reported on April investment results. In a very volatile market, the SMRA investment portfolio dropped in value to \$841,380.

Sanctuaries: Jeff Pinerio is working on new entrance signs for Brinton Brook and Pruy sanctuaries. Jeanne Romeu reported that Croton police held some reconnaissance maneuvers at Brinton Brook. Meredith Smith volunteered to take over coordination of the Trail Walkers. Danny Ferguson submitted a report on trail maintenance.

New committee chairs and members: In addition to Chris Slagle and the Environmental Action committee, Ponie Sheehan will assume the chairmanship of the Program committee and Joan Coffey the chair of the Education and Scholarship committee. Erika Miller will be involved in field trips. Cori Cumming was added to the Hospitality committee.

Programs: The Environmental Quiz was cancelled due to shortage of participants. Stan Wecker suggested sending the one school which fielded a team a subscription to Audubon magazine as recompense.

Stan also mentioned that the Program Committee works closely with Chappaqua Library to reserve dates for our events and meetings. He will email the current reservations to the SMRA office so that they can be attached to the minutes.

Report from the Spring State Audubon Council meeting: Richard Saravay reported on activities underway for the state's celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the National Audubon Society. These include an Audubon At Home session in early May at the Stone Barns in Pocantico, birding programs also in early May, a birding breakfast at the Explorers' Club in Manhattan in May, Bedford Audubon's Audubon At Home day, and "Cats at Home" day on May 14 (to raise awareness of controlling felines). Full calendar and details are available on the State Audubon Web site at <http://ny.audubon.org>.

Newsletter: The summer newsletter is past deadline for submission of articles, and into production.

Hospitality: Thanks to Jeanne Romeu and Erika Miller for tonight's refreshments.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m. The next meeting will be Tuesday, June 21, after the annual Board picnic at Karen Wells's house.