

**Saw Mill River Audubon – Board Meeting Minutes**  
**November 7, 2005**  
**At the Community Bible Church of Northern Westchester**

**Present:** Robert McCrillis, presiding, Jim Anderson, Cori Cumming, Burton Leiser, Tom McEnerney, Ken Novenster, Margo Peters, Jeanne Romeu, Richard Saravay, George Shakespear, Rita Wecker, and Stan Wecker.  
Guest: Anne Swaim

**Meeting was called to order** at 7:36 p.m.

**Minutes of October 5, 2005:** In the Finance report description, “mid-cap index fund shares” should read “mid-cap index Admiral Fund shares.” Minutes approved and accepted as amended.

**President’s Report:** Robert McCrillis reviewed and circulated correspondence, including an announcement of a DEC photo contest, a survey of bird watching, a listing of “Global Watch” films at the Jacob Burns Center in Pleasantville, and tours by the Native Plant Center to Virginia. The New York State Ornithological organization’s materials list our November 19 trip.

A summary of the Board Orientation on October 29 was circulated and everyone was encouraged to read it and to add their own personal commitments to the priorities discussed.

Richard Saravay reported on the latest state Audubon Council meeting, held in Ithaca. Among other news:

- A series of grants were announced, to be applied to Important Bird Areas. Application forms are on the NYS Audubon Web site. Richard suggested that the group think about things we want to do and devise a strategy for applying for a grant for one of our local IBAs.
- Also, an ad hoc committee was established to revise the strategic plan for NYS Audubon. They are accepting recommendations for initiatives in science, education, and policy.
- The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has a useful new Web site, “All About Birds.”
- Everyone is urged to write or call Representative Sue Kelly regarding protecting the Artic Wildlife Refuge.
- Richard reported that Bedford Audubon was left a house with about 300 acres, of which 90 acres was sought by New York City to protect their watershed. New York offered a significant amount of money to Bedford Audubon to preserve it in perpetuity. A question was raised with regard to whether there might be similar opportunities in our sanctuary holdings.
- eBird.com is an interactive site on which to report sightings, co-sponsored by National Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.
- Richard reported that the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is quite an interesting place, and strongly recommended planning a weekend field trip there. Also nearby is the Montezuma Refuge, with a very different selection of birds from what we see along the coast.

The Deer Symposium, a “Conversation on Conservation,” will be held November 6 at Pace University. Burton Leiser, Margo Peters, Robert McCrillis, and Anne Swaim plan to attend.

Planning and Budget Committee meetings need to be scheduled this month, in order to present the 2006 budget at the December meeting. All committee chairs are asked to submit budgets for their activities. Rita Wecker reported that the Finance Committee’s pro forma contribution to the 2006 budget will be \$40,463.

A Personnel Committee meeting also needs to be scheduled this week. In lieu of other volunteers, Robert agreed to call a meeting to do research and to bring a proposal to the Budget Committee.

**Sanctuaries Committee:** Chair Jeanne Romeu reported that the ribbon-cutting ceremony at Brinton Brook was a success, with excellent weather, attendance by several Board members and a Croton Village trustee, and good feedback from all participants. She thanked Anne Swaim and Danny Ferguson for having the 20 new signs installed in time.

Dredging work on the Hakim family’s pond, adjacent to Pinecliff Sanctuary, was stopped by the Town of New Castle at our request on November 2. Their contractors also replaced the stones they had removed from the

stream spillway. This restored water levels in the swamp. The Hakims are deciding whether or not to apply for a wetland permit.

Ellen Heidelberger prepared a printout of all trail walkers.

Wednesday, November 9, is a work day at Pruyn Garden. All are encouraged to come.

**Community Relations and Development:** Total memberships are up to 827, chapter-only members up to 230, and donations to date are over \$15,000. Solicitation letters will go out in early December to people who have not already given this year.

**Field Trips:** Anne Swaim delivered committee chair Joan Coffey's report. A recent committee meeting developed a list of events up through May. A list was circulated for people to sign up as greeters and hosts.

The Eagle Festival will be held by Teatown Lake Reservation again this year, on February 12. SMRA has the opportunity to participate as co-sponsor again; last year, that cost \$500. We would be the sponsor at Croton Point and have a table at Teatown as well. After discussion of how to maximize the value of the opportunity (e.g., having SMRA newsletters on hand, perhaps photographs of birds in the sanctuaries), it was moved to approve being a co-sponsor once again. The motion was seconded and carried.

**Bird Seed Sale:** Ken Novenster reported that lots of seed was left over at the end of the last sale, and had to be moved from the parking lot to the seed shed at Pruyn. Total pre-orders were down a fair amount, but the profit for the day was only down \$1,000-1,200 compared to last year.

A discussion of the causes for the decline in sales ensued. One theory is that the seed sales have become so frequent that people expect us to have them on a regular basis, operating like a seed store. Jim Anderson suggested that we need to call and contact people personally to remind people who ordered last year about the sale. This was not done this year. A list of 145 people who ordered seed last year but not this year exists; we should do follow-up with them before the December seed sale. Several volunteers stepped forward to divide up the calls.

**Naturalist's Report:** Anne Swaim reported that school programs are not very active in November and December.

#### **Finances:**

*Treasurer's Report*—Treasurer Tom McEnerney reported that total revenues through the end of October (\$51,174) were pretty close to budget and total expenses (\$98,634) approximately \$20,000 below budget. Sanctuary expenses are above plan, due to the printing of new sanctuary maps as well as high levels of sign installation and trail maintenance. Seed sale expenses are down approximately \$4,000, and Development Consulting fees are down approximately \$13,000. With \$47,000 funds transferred from the Endowment, the net change in the operating fund is minus \$460.

*Interim Finance Report*—Finance Chair Rita Wecker presented the performance report for the quarter ending September 30. The ending balance is \$923,993, reflecting a 3.16% percent increase in balance for the year to date. Outside of withdrawals and additions, the portfolio's investment rate of return is running at 4.7% year to date, slightly above the rate of the Lipper Balanced Fund Average. Our investments in foreign stocks were increased from 6.1% of the portfolio at the end of the second quarter to 9.2% at the end of the third quarter; a somewhat higher risk profile in the hope of higher returns. Rita also noted that cash on hand for operating expenses was slightly lower than the guideline of twice the annual budgeted amount of withdrawals, but not enough that the committee was concerned.

**Publicity:** George Shakespear reported that a press release was mailed to feature editors announcing the dedication of the new Brinton Brook signs. A reporter from the Croton Gazette attended the ceremony [and a front-page photo and article resulted in the following week.]

**Hospitality:** Thanks to Jeanne, Cori, Robert, and Anne for hospitality at this meeting.

**Meeting adjourned** at 9:25 p.m. The next monthly meeting will be on Monday, December 5.