

**Saw Mill River Audubon – Corrected Board Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2005
At the Community Bible Church of Northern Westchester**

Present: Robert McCrillis, presiding, Joan Coffey, Cori Cumming, Sophie Keyes, Tom McEnerney, Erika Miller, Margo Peters, Jeanne Romeu, Stan Rosenthal, Richard Saravay, George Shakespear, Ponie Sheehan, Meredith Smith, and Karen Wells. Guest: Anne Swaim

Meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

Minutes of November 7, 2005: Minutes were approved and accepted as submitted.

President's Report: Robert McCrillis reviewed and circulated correspondence, including an announcement of Maine Audubon summer camp sessions, correspondence from attorney general Eliot Spitzer, NYS Audubon information, and a donation from the Federated Garden Clubs of New York State.

Robert McCrillis, Cori Cumming, Burton Leiser, Margo Peters, and Anne Swaim attended the deer symposium, a "Conversation on Conservation," held on November 6 at Pace University. All reported very good presentations and dialogue, though the symposium ended without identifying clear action steps. One interesting idea to try in a SMRA sanctuary: "exclosures" that fence deer out of a designated area and permit understory vegetation to recover, as has been installed at Mianus River. Another idea may be for the chapter to sponsor a deer symposium ourselves, to pull more people into the dialogue.

Finances:

2006 Budget—Treasurer Tom McEnerney presented 2005 year-to-date actuals and final year-end estimates, and the proposed 2006 budget for discussion and approval. He started with a discussion of the Personnel Committee's report and recommendations for 2006 salaries and benefits. After discussion, all board members present voted to implement the recommendations. Then Tom proceeded to explain the components of the 2006 budget. He pointed out Bird Seed Chairman Ken Novenster's recommendation for a more modest seed sale revenue budget for 2006, reflecting the recent decline in seed sales (though net income from seed sales is less affected). It was moved that the seed sale budget for 2006 be reduced from \$25,000 to \$24,000; the motion was seconded and approved. With that adjustment, total revenue for 2006 is budgeted at \$92,963, slightly higher than the total 2005 estimated final but slightly lower than the 2005 budget.

On the expense side, total expenses for 2006 are budgeted at \$132,715, again higher than the 2005 total estimated final but lower than the 2005 budget. Major changes in line items include increased heating and fuel costs for Pruyn House, increased reimbursement for car travel related to education programs, higher insurance fees, and an increased allotment for conventions (primarily to cover participation in the NYS Audubon Council). Major decreases in line items budgeted for 2006 include a significant reduction in development consulting fees for 2006 and lower expenses for seed sales. Actual expenses for sanctuary maintenance were approximately \$2,000 over budget for 2005, reflecting extra hours necessary for sign installations, but this expense is not expected to recur in 2006.

The 2006 budget also includes a line for capital expenses, covering the \$4,200 approved by the board at the October monthly meeting for construction of new entrance signs at Pruyn and Brinton Brook sanctuaries.

Jeanne Romeu moved that the 2006 budget be accepted as amended. The motion was seconded and passed.

Interim Finance Report—Tom McEnerney presented Finance Chair Rita Wecker's report on investment performance for the month of November. The value of the portfolio on November 30 was \$921,885, up 3.22 percent from October 31, in a rebound from a decline in October. All SMRA mutual funds were up for the month of November. \$9,000 was removed from Vanguard Treasuries Money Market Fund to cover operating expenses.

Bird Seed Sale: In Ken Novenster's absence, Robert reported that follow-up telephone calls to previous bird seed buyers had gone well, and so turnout at the coming Saturday's seed sale should be solid. Anne Swaim noted that coverage on Saturday morning was a bit light; a couple of further volunteers offered to help out.

Sanctuaries Committee: Chair Jeanne Romeu continued the discussion of deer hunting on SMRA sanctuaries and adjacent properties, noting that one hunter had been apprehended hunting illegally at Brinton Brook. There's also a question of adjacent properties. Anne noted that DEC regulations prohibit hunting within 500 feet of a public trail.

Jeanne also discussed the idea of walking out a new trail to re-connect Brinton Brook to the Village of Croton's trails on the south side of the sanctuary. The previous connector, which went over private property, has been closed off by a new landowner. However, it should be possible to re-connect on Brinton Brook property. Jeanne plans to ask Danny Ferguson to map a new trail out. She suggested that SMRA then ask the village to pay for two days of trail clearing to create the new trail, which will benefit the village.

Meredith Smith reported that she has been contacting all 23 trail walkers and talking with everyone. Most plan to continue.

Community Relations and Development: Total memberships are up to 839, chapter-only members up to 249, and donations to date are \$15,764.

Field Trips: Committee chair Joan Coffey reported the committee decided to forego the wildflower walk this year, as it was not well attended the last two years. It may be replaced by a dragonfly walk. The question of an overnight trip to Cornell University and Montezuma Reserve was discussed; it will be considered by the committee. The next committee meeting will likely be in March.

Naturalist's Report: Anne Swaim reported that she and Jeff Pinerio had obtained approval from the New Castle Planning Board for the new Pruyn entrance signs. Also, a new grant has just been received from The New York City Environmental Fund, to cover two new kiosks at the trailheads at Pruyn Sanctuary.

Anne also reported complications in getting the new credit card system online. It's still being pursued, but is not ready for use yet.

Publicity: George Shakespear circulated the Croton Gazette front-page article on the dedication of the new Brinton Brook interpretive signs and suggested that a press release be created to announce the new grant for kiosks at Pruyn.

Hospitality: Thanks to Sophie Keyes and Cori Cumming for hospitality at this meeting.

New Business: Robert suggested a luncheon on Sunday, April 9 to honor Stan and Rita Wecker as well as other retiring board members, and asked for volunteers for a committee to plan this event. Also, the Board will need an alternate meeting place for the May meeting; Van Cortlandt Manor is one possibility. Finally, a venue is also needed for the June picnic; suggestions are requested.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m. The next monthly meeting will be on Monday, January 2.