

**Saw Mill River Audubon – Draft Board Meeting Minutes  
February 6, 2006  
At the Community Bible Church of Northern Westchester**

**Present:** Robert McCrillis, presiding, Jim Anderson, Joan Coffey, Cori Cumming, Sophie Keyes, Tom McEnerney, Ken Novenster, Margo Peters, Jeanne Romeu, Stan Rosenthal, Richard Saravay, George Shakespear, Ponie Sheehan, Meredith Smith, and Karen Wells.

Guests: Sally Dow, Trish Foy, Phil Heidelberger, Bill Kellner, Michael Madias, Elaine Mason, Anne Swaim.

**Meeting was called to order** at 7:30 p.m. with a quorum present.

**Minutes of January 2, 2006:** Under the Finances entry, the second sentence will be fixed to read “Treasurer Tom McEnerney expects to have the final **2005 numbers** by the February meeting.” It was moved, seconded, and passed that the January minutes be accepted as amended. Likewise, it was moved, seconded, and passed that the December 12, 2005 minutes be accepted as amended at the January 2 meeting, where there had not been a quorum.

**President’s Report:** Robert McCrillis welcomed the guests at the meeting, and each person briefly introduced himself or herself. Further people interested in getting involved in the chapter’s activities may attend the March meeting in advance of the annual elections in April.

Various correspondence was reviewed and circulated, including a brochure on Nature Odyssey, one on Maine Audubon summer camp sessions, an announcement of the next New York State Audubon Council meeting (March 24-26 in Saratoga Springs), an announcement of the Native Plant Center’s spring sale (April 29), a conference on urban ecology (March 4 at Long Island University’s Brooklyn Campus, co-sponsored by WildMetro), and an educational brochure by the Greenburgh Nature Center on dealing with wild animals.

Plans for the April 9 Dinner and Annual Meeting were discussed. The ad hoc Annual Dinner committee investigated several restaurant options and presented a recommendation to hold the dinner and meeting at Travelers Rest from 5 to 9 p.m. After group discussion of various pricing arrangements, including covering the complimentary invitees (the Weckers, SMRA staff, and 2 guests from the state office), Richard Saravay moved that the Board have a dinner at Travelers Rest priced at \$55 per person, with a line on the invitation’s reply card to allow for additional donations. The motion was seconded and passed

**Nominating Committee:** Robert McCrillis circulated a preliminary ballot for the annual election of officers and directors in April. He reported that George Shakespear has agreed to become Vice President and that the Recording Secretary slot is open. He encouraged people to consider volunteering for that position, noting that George had taken it on a year ago as a one-year rotating assignment and that it’s a good way to become familiar with all the organization’s activities.

**Finances:**

Treasurer Tom McEnerney circulated the final, unaudited numbers for operating revenues and expenses for the year ended December 31, 2005. The annual audit starts in May, after tax season closes. Tom also noted that the 2006 budget is not an austerity budget, but in line with recent annual budgets.

*Finance Report*— Finance Committee member Phil Heidelberger circulated and discussed the investment portfolio performance report for the period ending December 31, 2005. For the year, the SMRA portfolio had a rate of return of 6.9 percent, ending the year with a balance of \$913,167, slightly higher than the \$895,711 tally at year-end 2004. Phil also noted that the balance of stocks in the portfolio has reached 77 percent, a little higher than the committee is comfortable with. As a result, the committee voted to move some monies out of stocks into money market funds.

**Bird Seed Sale:** Bird Seed Committee chair Ken Novenster asked for more volunteers for the next sale, which has been moved to Saturday, February 11. Another sale is planned on March 4.

**Sanctuaries:** Sanctuaries Committee chair Jeanne Romeu complemented Danny Ferguson on keeping trails cleared in the sanctuaries after recent wind storms. Ken Novenster reported that a large tree was down near the Crow Hill Road entrance to the Choate Sanctuary. Also, a tree is down at Pruyin Sanctuary; Meredith Smith volunteered to propose a cleanup project to a local youth group.

Jeanne also reported that four ATVs had been sighted in Brinton Brook Sanctuary last Sunday. Further deterrents are being considered, including positioning boulders to impede ATV traffic.

Jeanne and Anne Swaim also discussed the need to re-post the boundaries of the sanctuaries. A boundary survey exists, but many current postings are gone and need to be replaced. Winter is the season to do it. It was suggested to set a date and walk the boundaries as a small group, starting with the larger sanctuaries. Jeanne and the Sanctuaries Committee will follow-up on this.

**Community Relations and Development:** Total memberships are up to 862, up from 850 at year-end. Early figures have started coming in for donations and chapter membership dues. Development Consultant Barbara Campbell's monthly report, circulated at the meeting, noted that she plans to meet with the Development Committee in February to plan this year's annual fund drive. She recommends following a similar approach to last year's appeal, which was the most successful ever. Robert McCrillis reported that the next meeting for the Development Committee will be noon on February 22 at Pruyn House. Committee members will be notified of specific details.

Anne also noted that the Ginsburg Fund had just turned down our grant request for new garden signs at Pruyn.

**Environmental Action:** A "biodiversity workshop" was held last Saturday at Cortlandt Town Hall to encourage residents of Cortlandt, Yorktown, New Castle, Putnam Valley, and Phillipstown to consider dedicating land outright or in conservation easements. Karen Wells attended this meeting, which was sponsored by the Cortlandt Land Trust and the Westchester Land Trust. A related article in the Westchester section of the New York Times reported on efforts to create "biotic corridors" to prevent fragmentation of habitats and populations. Ken Novenster volunteered to contact the Westchester Land Trust to investigate how these corridors might affect SMRA sanctuaries.

**Field Trips:** Field Trip Committee chair Joan Coffey reported that the January 21 eagle walk at Croton Point was a tremendous success, with 40-50 people in attendance and sightings of eagles, mergansers, red-tailed hawks, screech owls, long-eared owls, a merlin, and a meadowlark, among other birds.

The Eagle Festival, sponsored by SMRA in conjunction with Teatown Lake Reservation and other local environmental groups, is scheduled for Sunday, February 12. [Secretary's note, post meeting: Due to blizzard conditions, the festival was postponed to Sunday, February 19.] Volunteers are needed to man the SMRA warming tent at the Croton River and a table at Teatown. A signup sheet was circulated.

**Naturalist's Report:** Naturalist and Education Director Anne Swaim reported that several educational programs are planned at Ardsley Middle School next month, as well as programs in Buchanan and Verplanck schools. In March, an after-school program is scheduled at Westorchard Elementary School in Millwood. May and June are already heavily booked, though there are still some openings in March.

Anne also reported that Trish Foy has been cataloging SMRA books into the computer at the office. She added that both office computers are out of date and recommended adding memory to both and upgrading Ellen's computer. There will be further discussions of incremental improvements vs. more dramatic steps.

**Programs:** A Program Committee meeting needs to be called; next week is being considered.

The Bird Box Building Workshop will be held on March 18 at the Community Bible Church. Anne Swaim noted the Birding Workshop may shift to April, and possibly be held at the Kendal community.

**Publicity:** It was suggested that the April 9 dinner honoring Stan and Rita Wecker may be a good occasion for publicity.

**Hospitality:** Thanks to Cori Cumming, Tom McEnerney, and Ken Novenster for refreshments at this meeting.

**New Business:** The annual June picnic, proposed to be held at Croton Point Park this year, was briefly discussed. A committee is needed to plan it.

A "Pruyn Celebration" day, to mark new kiosks and signage, as well as the continuing development of the butterfly garden at Pruyn Sanctuary is being considered. Current thinking is that fall would be a good time.

The next copy deadline for the "On the Wing" newsletter is March 1.

**Meeting adjourned** at 9 p.m. The next monthly meeting will be on Monday, March 6.