

Saw Mill River Audubon – Revised Board Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2006
At the home of Sophie Keyes, 209 Barnes Street, Ossining

Present: Robert McCrillis, presiding, Ed Bezursik, Joan Coffey, Cori Cumming, Sally Dow, Philip Heidelberger, Bill Kellner, Sophie Keyes, Burton Leiser, Tom McEnerney, Michael Madias, Elaine Mason, Jeanne Romeu, Stan Rosenthal, Richard Saravay, George Shakespear, Meredith Smith, and Larry Trachtenberg. Staff: Anne Swaim

Meeting was called to order at 7:34 p.m. with a quorum present.

Minutes: Two corrections were suggested by Jeanne Romeu to the minutes of the April 3 Board meeting. Under the Sanctuaries heading, delete “Jeanne will attend” the Town of Cortlandt Planning Meeting on April 4. Also, in the last sentence of the section, change “Cortlandt Town Supervisor” to “a representative of the Village of Croton Department of Public Works.” It was moved, seconded, and passed that the April 3 minutes be accepted as amended.

It was also moved, seconded, and passed that the April 9, 2005 minutes of the Annual Meeting & Election be accepted as submitted.

President’s Report: Robert McCrillis opened the meeting by thanking the April 9 Dinner and Annual Meeting Committee for a very successful event. Stan Rosenthal helped with arrangements with the restaurant. Ken Novensterne liaised with public officials. Anne Swaim obtained the speaker and composed the video tribute. Robert proposed making the dinner and annual meeting a regular annual event, eliminating the April Board meeting.

Robert circulated a few items of mail and correspondence of general interest: an announcement of a dinner for Andrew Spano on May 21, a brochure for a fundraiser by the Native Plant Center at Martha Stewart’s house on June 8, an article from the *North County News* about Cortlandt declaring victory in pipeline controversy (former Board member Karen Wells was involved), an announcement of gardening lectures at Kykuit, a brochure for a National Audubon Society trip to Greece in October, the quarterly *New York Birders* newsletter by the New York State Ornithological Association, and a field guide to birding tours worldwide, published in April 2006.

Robert also noted that Ed Bezursik’s name had been inadvertently left off the annual election ballot. He moved that Ed be elected to be a Board member, joining the Class of 2007. It was seconded and approved.

Robert also announced initial plans for a retreat in October, to orient new Board members and to discuss long-term planning and goals for the organization.

Board members’ handbooks were distributed to new Board members.

A new Board roster was also distributed to all members. Robert asked everyone to double-check it and to let the SMRA office know of any changes. Likewise, a new list of officers and committee membership was distributed. Cori Cumming is the new Chair for the Program Committee. Bill Kellner will be added to the Bulletin Committee, Ed Bezursik to the Development Committee, and George Shakespear to the Development Committee. More people are needed for the Bird Seed Sale Committee; Elaine Mason volunteered.

The June 5 Board potluck picnic will be held at Senasqua Park in Croton-on-Hudson, thanks to permission obtained by Jeanne Romeu. Grilling was discussed and dismissed. The SMRA office will furnish drinks and paper goods. Meredith Smith volunteered to chair the event, and a sign-up sheet for various food items was circulated.

Richard Saravay reported on three items from the Audubon Council of New York State. New bylaws were passed; a copy is in the SMRA office and Richard has one as well. A Community Preservation Act has passed the State Assembly and is now headed to the Senate. It provides for a set-aside for open spaces under town and local jurisdiction. Richard recommended that SMRA as a chapter send a letter of support. He will draft it and send to Ellen at the SMRA office. He suggested that the Environmental Committee then consider how to share the information further with all SMRA members and to encourage all to speak to their local officials about it. More information is available on the Audubon New York Web site. Finally, Richard noted that the Council’s slate of candidates for Board members (including Richard) needs a vote from the chapter. The slate was discussed and then it was moved that it be approved, seconded, and passed.

Finances:

Treasurer Tom McEnerney circulated operating revenues and expenses for the four months ended April 30, 2006. Revenues are a bit ahead of plan, largely due to early returns on the Annual Fund. Expenses are also slightly ahead of plan. Office Operations costs are up due to the purchase of new computers and Pruyn House costs are ahead due to New Castle tax bill and oil costs significantly higher than expected. PR and Fund Raising is slightly ahead of plan due to the mailings for the annual dinner as well as the Annual Fund Drive.

On a separate sheet, Tom highlighted some adjustments to Operating Revenues and Expenses, including the Larry Light Scholarship Fund, which paid out a \$5,000 scholarship and received a \$250 earmarked donation. The Annual Dinner on April 9 netted a profit of \$100 once all expenses and revenues were tallied up. Also, monies from two recent grants have been received: \$5,000 for kiosks at Pruyn Sanctuary and \$1,000 for interpretive signs at Pruyn.

Finance Report—Finance Committee Chair Phil Heidelberger discussed quarterly investment portfolio performance for the first quarter of 2006. After disbursements, the SMRA portfolio had a 4.02 percent increase since January 1, 2006, to reach a balance of \$949,885. The investment rate of return as of March 31, 2006, was 5.3 percent. In April, the chapter withdrew \$14,000 for operating funds but has stayed close to even in total balance.

The chapter is within or close to all its investment portfolio guidelines except Guideline 6, which provides for having cash at hand for operating expenses at the rate of twice the annual budgeted amount of withdrawals from the Endowment Fund. We are currently \$5,404 below that guideline, but a CD will mature soon and will help fill the gap.

Education and Scholarship report: The Education Committee did not meet last week and will reschedule in order to discuss education agenda and scholarship plans.

Bird Seed Sale: The bird seed sale on Saturday, April 29, did over \$1,200 in sales. Little inventory of seed was left over. Dates for the fall sale and for a committee meeting in July will be set soon.

Sanctuaries: Sanctuaries Committee chair Jeanne Romeu reported that handsome new signs are now posted at the entrances to both Pruyn and Brinton Brook sanctuaries. They look beautiful.

There was discussion of donations and fund raising to pay for signs at these two sanctuaries and at the remaining SMRA sanctuaries. It was suggested that the discussion be continued at the Development Committee meeting.

Jeanne thanked the Village of Croton Department of Public Works for the 25-30 boulders they donated to Brinton Brook sanctuary.

Templates for trail walkers' reports are available online at the SMRA web site. Anyone who walks a trail at a SMRA sanctuary is encouraged to submit a trail walker's report or to email a short description to the SMRA office.

The Earth Day cleanup at Choate Sanctuary was rained out, but is re-scheduled for this upcoming Saturday, May 6, from 2-4 p.m. Digital photos will be taken for the summer newsletter. The Youth Group at the St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Mt. Kisco will try to do future cleanups at Choate when necessary.

Pruyn Arboretum and Garden: Tom McEnerney reported that six people showed up last Wednesday, April 26, for the first weekly session of the year. The group plans to meet at Pruyn Sanctuary every Wednesday to plant and to tend the garden; volunteers are welcome.

In addition, someone is needed to tend and to weed the pathway to the SMRA office, which has become overgrown.

Community Relations and Development: The Annual Fund Drive letters total 1,184 individual letters, just slightly up from last year. Robert encouraged everyone to complete their part of the mailing, if that has not been done yet. Costs for the mailing were \$3,350, slightly down from last year despite higher postage rates. For the June Board meeting, Development Consultant Barbara Campbell will provide a report on donations received.

Barbara's report encouraged all committees to think about potential grant proposal projects. She will also be investigating new sources of funding for the sanctuary entrance signs and garden signs.

Environmental Action:

Robert McCrillis reported that Chris Slagle and Ponie Sheehan plan to attend the Water Testing seminar on May 20, part of the citizen Volunteer Water Monitoring initiative organized by the Westchester County Department of Planning. They will report on it at the June meeting.

The Program Committee has decided to take on the Tappan Zee corridor planning project as a program topic for next season, along with a forum on Indian Point.

Richard Saravay suggested that the chapter consider collaborating on a global warming symposium and that matching wind-energy credits be considered as a possible addition to chapter-only memberships.

Anne Swaim reported on two local land development issues, a development proposal named Lakeview Estates in Cortlandt Manor and an application by the Town of Cortlandt for support for a biodiversity study at the McAndrews property near Graff Sanctuary. Development of the Lakeview Estates property raises concerns about forest fragmentation, which Anne conveyed in a letter to Cortlandt Manor Planning Board.

Field Trips: Field Trip Committee chair Joan Coffey reported that the Constitution Marsh field trip on April 29 was very successful, with beautiful weather and a full turnout. Joan served as the chapter's greeter for the field trip. Two walks today (Monday, May 1) also went well: one led by Charlie Roberto and one led by Anne Swaim.

Coming up, Charlie Roberto will lead a walk at Teatown Lake Reservation on Tuesday, May 9 and Anne Swaim the "Second Saturday" walk at Pruyn on May 13. On Thursday, May 18, Richard Nelson will lead a walk at Rockefeller State Park, for which a SMRA greeter is needed. Sally Dow may be able to do it. On the evening of June 11, there will be a Full Moon Walk.

Larry Trachtenberg has joined the Field Trip Committee.

Next committee meeting will be held in the summer.

Programs: Robert McCrillis reported that Cori Cumming has taken on the chairmanship of the committee, which met recently to get organized. Five programs are planned for next year, with tentative topics and dates. Each program is being planned by a designated committee member.

The lineup of proposed programs includes a forum on the I-287 corridor in September, a program on river otters in the lower Hudson River in November or December, a presentation on "healthy backyards" in January in collaboration with the Taconic Gardeners Club, a February program on New York State's amphibians, and a roundtable on Indian Point in March, in collaboration with the League of Women Voters.

Richard Saravay suggested the chapter include a program on the ivory-billed woodpecker as well.

After January 1, 2007, it may be possible to return to Chappaqua Library for meetings and programs.

Naturalist's Report: Spring is the busy time for school as well as adult programs. Anne Swaim led the annual birding workshop, held this year at Kendal, with a good turnout of approximately 40 people. At Pinecliff, two walks are planned for the first week of May. Next week, three days of programs are planned at the Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden.

Publicity: Phil Heidelberger reported that the Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden at Pruyn Sanctuary was included in a roundup of Westchester public gardens in *Westchester* magazine.

New Business: Robert McCrillis noted that we need to plan "Pruyn Celebration" day in October, including programs and events.

Hospitality: Thanks to Sophie Keyes for refreshments and for hosting the meeting at her house.

Meeting adjourned at 9:27 p.m. The next Board meeting will be the annual picnic and meeting, to be held on June 5 at Senasqua Park in Croton-on-Hudson.

The May 1, 2006 minutes were recorded by George Shakespear.