

Saw Mill River Audubon Board Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 6, 2012
Held at the Community Bible Church of Northern Westchester

Present: Robert McCrillis, presiding. Joan Coffey, Chris Drury, Rik Kaufman, William Kellner, Donna Lassiter, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Jr., Joanne McAuley, Christine McCluskey, Thomas McEnerney, Ken Novenster, Nina Romanoff, Richard Saravay, Jean Sparacin, Larry Trachtenberg. Anne Swaim present as Executive Director.

Minutes from the January 9 board meeting were reviewed and approved.

President's Report /Mail and Correspondence:

Robert welcomed Julie Woodard who was observing the meeting. She is a possible candidate for the Board. George Shakespear has told Robert that he is no longer able to remain on the Board giving personal reasons. We have two available board positions.

The Annual Dinner Committee met this evening before board meeting. The Annual Dinner will be held Sunday, April 1 at Travelers Rest. Charlie Roberto has agreed to speak and will talk about butterfly photography. A ticket price of \$65 was voted by the board based on past experience of having between 50-60 people attending plus about 15 people as invited guests, an actual per person plate cost of \$41, and mailing costs. We hope to either break even or make a very small profit. Discussion followed.

Development: Robert asked everyone to look at the handout of the Development Report and Membership/Fund Drive Report – January 2012 prepared by Barbara Campbell and Ellen Heidelberger.

Treasurer's Report: Tom noted that it was only one month into the new year and that there was nothing unusual to report. Our auditors asked if we had a "whistle blowers" policy. His answer was no. He is willing to write a "WBP" for the board's approval. It was suggested that he might adapt something from such polices already out there, i.e. NYC Audubon and other Audubon groups.

The subject of the Pruyin Garden endowment came up because Bill Arnold is a member of the Finance Committee and was instrumental in securing the grant establishing this endowment. Bill suggested that we use donated plants instead of using the garden's endowment to buy plants. The Garden used \$1,400 in 2011 to buy new plants as part of the refurbishing plan for the garden. It was suggested that the endowment money be used for more permanent garden features. The 2012 plan for the garden indicates \$700 for new plants and \$600 for deer fencing. There is \$22,700 in the fund. Discussion followed during which Donna spoke about her plans for the garden and why buying new is preferred over donated plants. After discussion the board voted to approve the withdrawal of up to \$1,400 from the Garden endowment in 2012 to purchase new plants and fencing material.

Finance Committee (Phil Heidelberger): For our official quarterly report, as of January 1, 2012 the portfolio balance was \$835,841 an increase of 4.9% for the year, and an increase of 4.6% for the fourth quarter. There were \$100,000 in additions to and \$53,250 in withdrawals from the endowment during 2011. The one year and three year investment rates of return were -0.9% and 12.8%, respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of -1.1% and 8.5% for the same period. The balance as of February 1, 2012 was \$864,757, an increase of 3.5% year-to-date.

Executive Director's Report:

Eagle Fest was a success. Approximately 4,500 in attendance. We participated at three areas: main exhibition tent and the eagle viewing locations at the Croton boat ramp and George's Island. We received many e-mail sign-ups. Larry, Anne and Christine led bird walks at 12 noon (group of 100 people) and 2pm (group of 75-80 people). Anne thanked Ponie, Donna Lee and Christine for their work on the new table top exhibit. We will also plan to use it at River Day at Van Cortlandt Manor on the first Sunday in August.

Anne reported on adding Saw Mill River Audubon as an organization supporter on two issues at the request of Audubon New York. The first was thanking Governor Cuomo for support of the state environmental protection fund and the second was a letter to the US Fish and Wildlife Service concerning The Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act.

Nominating Committee – Jean Sparacin and Nancy Ruffner agreed to be on this Committee along with Anne Swaim. The Class of 2013 now has an opening with George Shakespear's resignation. The Class of 2014 also has an opening.

Scholarship request – from mother and son to attend an Audubon event in Florida 2012 was reviewed by Larry and Rik. They both concurred that the applications were weak and should not be supported by SMRA. Christine McCluskey will receive a Chapter Leader scholarship to attend training in August 2012.

We could still fund a youth scholarship to go to Audubon Camp in Maine. Please tell Anne if you know of anyone interested.

NYS Young Birders met on January 14 at Croton Point Park Nature Center. Anne and Christine set up the coffee and refreshments and greeted the group. Christine helped with the activities for approximately 10 kids (ages 10 -18) and their parents. All had a great time.

Advocacy: Richard spoke about the future NY Audubon State Council semi-annual meeting to be held in Saratoga on March 25-26. The head of National Audubon, David Yarnold, will be guest speaker. David Yarnold will speak about the NAS strategic plan that focuses on the major flyways. Richard reported that the Fall 2012 meeting is being planned for the second weekend in October (14-16) and will be in the Walkill area with joint involvement of New Jersey Audubon.

Sanctuaries Committee: Michael Madias reported that five people helped with the January 22 workday at Graff. Next workday will be Sunday, February 25 at Brinton Brook Sanctuary. Anne and Michael met with a surveyor who is also on the board of Central Westchester Audubon. He reviewed the individual boundary lines about which we have questions at Pruyn and Brinton Brook and gave us a quote for new surveys complete with permanent stakes. We plan to spend approximately \$900 from the sanctuary budget towards this work this year. February 11 will be the Second Saturday walk at Brinton. In our schedule of reviewing all boundary lines, we plan to review the boundaries of Brinton, Pruyn and Graff in 2012. Michael and Anne also met with a NYSDEC forester to visit Brinton Brook & Graff so that we might obtain a free forestry health assessment.

Choate Sanctuary – Ken updated Board on Town of New Castle actions on the town-owned lands adjacent to Choate and those town-owned lands under a 99-year lease to SMRA at Choate. Apparently the town is considering selling some of their open parcels. Some of these parcels may be adjacent to the sanctuary. Ken contacted Susan Carpenter (new Town Supervisor) and also had lunch with town attorney. He learned that it was the outgoing Supervisor who had made plans to review what parcels the Town owns and what to do with each parcel. Discussion followed. A "Park" designation on our leased parcel would further protect these parcels or ownership transfer to SMRA. Anne will write a letter to the Town to document our concerns.

Anne reported that SMRA had been contacted by representatives from The French-American School of New York who has purchased the 128-acre property formerly belonging to Ridgeway Country Club in White Plains. This is the largest remaining open space parcel in White Plains. The school plans to build a new school on 40 acres and established protected wildlife habitat and do environmental education on the remaining acres. There is strong neighbor opposition. Anne has contacted Central Westchester Audubon since this property is in their territory and they will take the lead on this issue.

Newsletter: Deadline for next newsletter (for April/May issue) is March 1. Current issue was sent out last week. Bill Kellner thanked everyone involved in getting the issue out and asked for volunteers to take extra copies to area libraries.

Bird Seed Sale:

Ken reported over \$1,200 income at the last Saturday Seed Sale. Next sale is February 18. Volunteer list was passed around.

Programs and Field Trips:

Program Committee (Chris Drury) – Committee meeting needed. Have possible program for June - “Walking Westchester” author, Jane Daniels, approached us to give a talk (free) – possibly at Ossining Public Library.

Field trips (Christine McCluskey)

Weekend trips:

- 1) February 18-19 Cape Ann, MA. Cosponsored by Bronx River Sound Shore. Will stay at Rockport Inn and Suites. Have 10 people signed up – real possibility of getting more rooms.
- 2) Raptor Fest at Fort Edward (past Albany) with Eastern LI Audubon - March 10-11. See winterraptorfest.com.

Hospitality: Jean thanked Chris Drury and Rik Kaufman for bringing refreshments.

New Business: None

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m. Minutes taken by Joanne McAuley.