

**Saw Mill River Audubon**  
**September 9, 2019 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by Bill Kellner)**  
**Meeting at the Croton Point County Park Nature Center, Croton-on-Hudson, NY**

**Present (in bold type): Cary Andrews, Ginger Bernardin, Earl DePass, Louisa Gagliardi, Roger Garrison, Phil Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, Bill Kellner, Donna Lassiter, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Jr., Joanne McAuley, Tom McEnerney, Ken Novenster, Steve Rappaport, Nina Romanoff, Tom Ruth, Lynn Salmon, Richard Saravay, Jean Sparacin, Larry Trachtenberg, Debbie van Zyl, Kathleen Williamson.** Executive Director Anne Swaim was also present.  
ABSENT: Joanne, Larry, Debbie

Meeting started at 7:26 pm.

**President's Report—Valerie Lyle**

It was noted that a quorum was present.

Kathleen moved that the board of directors approve the minutes for the board of directors meeting held on June 4, 2019. Lynn seconded this motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

A printed roster with contact information for SMRA officers, board members and staff was provided to all attendees. It was noted that Office Manager Ellen Heidelberger will be away from Sept. 30 to Oct. 14. Normal office hours will be kept during Ellen's absence.

There will be a board of directors retreat held on Nov. 9 from 9:00 AM to 12:00 noon at Mariandale. An optional lunch is available following the retreat at a cost of \$12. The retreat agenda includes committee budget planning and a review of SMRA's mission focusing on three areas: sanctuaries, education and advocacy. Upon arrival at the retreat, attendees will choose to participate in one of these focus area discussion groups.

**The December board meeting has been rescheduled to Dec. 9.** The budget committee will meet on Dec. 2.

Board members may wish to attend a program on climate change scheduled for the Croton Free Library on Sep. 10. The title of the program is "The Croton Climate Plan: Learning from the Bedford Experience." Richard pointed out that there will be a screening on the same evening of the film "Hope on the Hudson" at the Bedford Playhouse.

**Treasurer's Report—Tom McEnerney**

[Reference handout: *Operating Revenues and Expenses for the 8 Months Ended August 31, 2019*]

SMRA's outside audit is ongoing; it is hoped that a meeting of the audit committee can be held prior to the October board meeting.

Total revenue as of Aug. 31 is approximately \$4,500 ahead of budget. Expenses are closer to the budget amount (approximately \$1,500 under budget). Overall, SMRA's financial situation may be described as "stable."

**Finance Committee—Philip Heidelberger**

For our official quarterly report, as of July 1, 2019 the portfolio balance was \$982,825, a \$92,249 (10.9%) increase above the January 1, 2019 balance of \$886,576. The three-month, year-to-date, one year and three-year investment rates of return were 3.2%, 13.1%, 6.2% and 8.8% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of 2.4%, 9.8%, 3.9% and 6.2% for the same periods. The portfolio balance on September 1, 2019 was \$979,510, an increase of \$92,934 (10.5%) YTD. We are \$50,451 (34.9%) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted expenses in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds. We anticipate having to withdraw about another \$40,000 for the rest of the year, so we have adequate cash on hand to cover those withdrawals. So far during 2019, there have been \$625 in additions to and \$20,700 in withdrawals from the portfolio.

**Development Report—Valerie Lyle**

[Reference handout: *Membership and Donation Report as of September 9, 2019.*]

There are currently 985 member households. SMRA Chapter member households have increased to 541 while the number of joint NAS/SMRA Member has decreased to 444 households. Donations year-to-date are at \$50,934.

Val pointed to Barbara Campbell's report on the back of the Membership and Donation report highlighting results of SMRA's Annual Appeal for 2019: as of Aug. 31 the annual fund has received donations of \$29,201 vs. \$28,202 at the same time in 2018.

**Lynn Salmon—Report on Establishment of Online Storefront**

SMRA will market SMRA branded items including clothing, coffee mugs and shopping bags on the Zazzle website. A portion of each sale will be donated to SMRA. Items will be manufactured on-demand by Zazzle's subcontractors and shipped directly to consumers who order from the website. We will publicize these offerings in our newsletter and via social media and email.

**Louisa Gagliardi—Report on SMRA's Fundraising Birdathon**

The Birdathon will take place from Oct. 4 to Oct. 6 in six lower Hudson Valley counties. Teams of three to five people will compete. Each team will be charged \$100 to participate. A flyer giving full details is available on the SMRA website.

**Seed Sale—Ken Novenster**

A volunteer sign-up sheet was passed around for the Annual Seed Sale to be held Sept. 28, 2019.

**Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim**

SMRA has sent a letter in support of a grant application to the Hudson River Estuary Program by the Westchester County Soil and Water Conservation District for educational signs about the Hudson River Estuary. Another advocacy letter was sent in support of comments made by Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society expressing concerns about the proposed Bluestone Wind Project and its potential impact on migrating and resident eagles (Bald Eagles and Golden Eagles).

SMRA has received an application from Adella Dapice, a 9<sup>th</sup> grade student from Ardsley, for a Larry Light Scholarship to cover the \$1,000 tuition for a program at the Bronx Zoo in the summer of 2020. The Executive Committee recommended approval of this application. Phil motioned that SMRA grant the scholarship with \$600 of the award coming from the scholarship fund in 2019 and the remaining \$400 to be awarded in 2020. Cary provided a second for this motion. The board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

SMRA's high school intern, Daniel Machada, from Peekskill High School continued monitoring this summer of the AVID (Assessing Vegetative Impacts from Deer) study plots at Brinton Brook and Pruyn Sanctuaries. Michael has provided much-appreciated supervision of the intern's projects.

New signs outlining SMRA's policy requiring dogs to be leashed at all times were prepared for Pruyn Sanctuary and will be installed this month.

The Chappaqua Friends Nursery School has agreed to increase supervision of children attending the Forest Preschool in the Pruyn Sanctuary. CFNS staff will now pick up and drop off children at their parent/caregiver vehicles and all vehicles will pull over on Woodmill Road on the side closest to the sanctuary but before the turn into Fluellen Drive at the sanctuary entrance. Neighbors had expressed concern about the behavior of children at drop-off and pick-up times.

The Forest Preschool Program will also continue this fall at Brinton Brook Sanctuary. The caretaker for the Weinstein property, which is adjacent to Brinton Brook, has expressed concerns about traffic on the sanctuary access road during student drop-off and pick-up times. Anne met with Eric Stone of the Rewilding School about this issue. Eric committed to increase supervision of this traffic and communicate traffic speeds and safety boundaries to the parents throughout the school year. These new protocols were shared with the Weinstains, requesting that they share further with their caretaker.

SMRA's summer college student volunteer, Josiah Weidenheft, collected GPS data for all sanctuary trails. Our sanctuary maps with this newly-gathered trail data will be geo-referenced to the Westchester County GIS basemap using the GPS Expert software. The maps will be made available for free with the Avenza PDF Map app (also free). SMRA received a donation of the professional level of GPS Expert software.

SMRA will lead a coastal birding trip to various birding hotspots along the Virginia, Delaware and New Jersey coasts. Dates are Oct. 10 through Oct. 14.

**Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim cont'd**

We are looking to reauthorize the sanctuary bowhunting program for the upcoming deer season. Participating SMRA sanctuaries are Choate, Pruyn and Brinton Brook. Program dates are Nov. 1 through Dec. 31. There are four hunters in the program; addition of a fifth hunter is being considered pending approval by the current hunters. Cary submitted a motion to reauthorize the SMRA hunting program for the 2019 deer season with the above dates. Ginger provided a second for the motion. The motion passed with all board members present voting to approve.

A monthly ad for SMRA events prepared by Anne Swaim is running in the *Examiner News* at no cost due to the monthly feature article written by former board member Brian Kluepfel. A recent article and ad was circulated to the board.

We are planning a trip to south Florida in late April (Apr. 22 through Apr. 30). A 2-day boat trip to the Dry Tortugas will be included as will a visit to Key West and other birding hotspots. There will be a limit of 10 people. Details to follow.

**Advocacy—Tom Ruth**

The film *Paris to Pittsburgh* will be shown on Sept. 25 at the Chappaqua Performing Arts Center. To attend, click on the reservations link in the SMRA Google calendar for that date. Kathleen is asking that board members sign up to bring refreshments for the reception that will precede the film. After the film there will be a discussion with an expert panel of speakers. We can send the poster promoting the event by email to any board members willing to distribute it.

SMRA will host a Climate Change Boot Camp with other Westchester Audubon chapters on Oct. 26 from 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM at the Westchester County Center. The focus will be on how local, regional and state governments are responding to this crisis. Another event organizational meeting will be held in late Sept/early Oct.

The Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2H) will hold a potluck dinner and all-partner meeting at the Westchester Land Trust's Bedford Hills headquarters on Oct. 3. Please contact Tom Ruth if you would like to participate.

Richard reminded the board that the Audubon New York fall council meeting will be held in Callicoon from Nov. 1 through Nov. 3. Val, Anne and Richard plan to attend.

**Sanctuaries—Michael Madias**

The September Second Saturday walk at Brinton Brook will be part of the annual Hudson Valley Ramble with an optional extension to the Croton Arboretum. Fall plantings are being scheduled for the sanctuaries. Volunteer help is always appreciated.

The Village of Croton on Hudson is selling a parcel of land that it owns in the Town of Cortlandt outside the Village. This parcel is northeast of our Brinton Brook Sanctuary, just beyond the Con Ed right-of-way on the sanctuary border, so we are monitoring this proposed sale.

**Pruyn Gardens Report—Donna Lassiter**

Our Pruyn gardens have been designated a Master Gardener Garden. This means that Master Gardeners who volunteer at Pruyn can get credits from the Cornell Cooperative Extension. Our Aug. 18 open house at the gardens attracted 60 visitors; 10 were Master Gardeners. Donna noted that we have seen an increase in pollinators at our Pruyn gardens as a result of the pollinator-friendly plantings.

We are also looking to partner with Cornell's Master Naturalist Program, which is being developed.

Anne will present a "Birding 101" program to Master Gardeners through SMRA's partnership with the Cornell Cooperative Extension.

**Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim for Debbie van Zyl**

Please see our fall newsletter for our programs and field trips schedule. We may continue to offer some afternoon walks across the year to see if this increases our weekend field trip attendance.

Bill and Carolyn Golden will present a program “Exploring Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge” at the Croton Free Library on Sept. 19. Expect to see some beautiful bird photography.

**SMRA Nature Book Club—Kathleen Williamson**

The club will discuss Victoria Johnson’s *American Eden* on Sept. 17 as well as a Jonathan Franzen essay *Carbon Capture*. On Nov. 5 we will discuss Caroline Alexander’s book *The Endurance* about the Shackleton expedition. January’s (date TBD) book is *Ice: the Nature, the History, and the Uses of an Astonishing Substance* by Mariana Gosnell. The club meets at 7:00 PM in the Mount Pleasant Library in Pleasantville.

**Newsletter—Anne Swaim**

The winter issue deadline is Nov. 1

**Refreshments—Jean Sparacin**

A sign-up sheet was passed around for volunteers to bring board meeting and program refreshments. The board thanked Jean for providing refreshments for tonight’s meeting.

**Adjournment—Valerie Lyle**

Valerie adjourned the meeting at 8:52.