

Saw Mill River Audubon
February 3, 2020 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, Phil Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, Bill Kellner, Donna Lassiter, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Jr., Joanne McAuley, Tom McEnerney, Ken Novenstern, 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: Earl, Nina, Kathleen

Meeting started at 7:20 pm.

President's Report— Valerie Lyle

It was noted that a quorum was present.

Lynn moved that the board of directors approve the minutes for the board of directors meeting held on Jan. 6, 2020. Joanne seconded this motion. The motion approving the minutes was adopted unanimously.

The list of SMRA committees was distributed. Board members were urged to check the list and make changes to their assignments if desired. Jean and Louisa indicated that they would like to join the Annual Dinner Committee. Anne said she would request that Joan Kellner be asked to join the Dinner Committee as well.

A new Development Committee is being established; Lynn will host an initial meeting on Feb. 12.

The Youth Education Committee is being established and we are looking for members.

Ed Mertz, a long-time SMRA member, passed away on Jan. 10. There will be a memorial service on Mar. 15. Ed was an accomplished nature photographer and committed volunteer with SMRA and other environmental organizations. Ed has left a generous bequest to SMRA, which will be added to the SMRA endowment. Ed expressed a strong interest in advancing SMRA's mission to educate young people. The Youth Education Committee will be assessing how to best utilize income from Ed's bequest.

Board members were urged to continue selling tickets for the SMRA quilt raffle.

Joanne McAuley will not continue on the board of directors after the end of her term this spring. The board expressed its appreciation to Joanne for her many years of service to SMRA. Although she will be leaving the board, Joanne intends to remain an active SMRA member.

Finance Committee— Phil Heidelberger

For our official quarterly report, as of January 1, 2020 the portfolio balance was \$1,028,687, a \$142,111 (16.0%) 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 5.0%, 19.9%, 19.9% and 9.2% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of 4.2%, 15.2%, 15.2% and 6.7% for the same periods. The portfolio balance on February 1, 2020 was \$1,027,305, a decrease of \$1,382 (0.1%) YTD. As of February 1, 2020, we are \$74,514 (56.1%) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted expenses in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds. There were \$19,967 in additions to and \$51,415 in withdrawals from the portfolio during 2019.

Treasurer's Report— Tom McEnerney

Despite having expenses \$2,500 more than revenues for the first month of 2020, we are in a very good cash flow position thanks to both budgeted and unbudgeted revenues received in late 2019 and early 2020. We ended the year with a checking account balance of approximately \$24,000. With our positive cash flow of \$6,000 for January, the checking account balance is currently close to \$30,000.

Louisa Gagliardi— Fund Raising Committee

We are planning a silent auction for our April 5th Annual Dinner and are looking for donors who can provide active events such as vacation stays. Please let Kathleen know if you are able to donate to the auction or can point us to potential donors.

Cary will host a fundraising “Tea with Birds” on Mar. 21. We will ask attendees for a donation of \$20 per person. A flyer was distributed with details about the event. We are looking for board members to attend and assist Cary.

In May Debbie and Anne will offer a Birders U class in conjunction with Putnam Highlands Audubon. The focus will be on warbler identification and the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas.

On July 11 we are planning a pontoon boat ride in the New Jersey Meadowlands where we hope to see a broad array of shorebirds and other wetland species.

SMRA will participate in the Crabtree’s Kittle House program of hosting fundraising dinners for nonprofits, “Sparkle for a Cause,” where a portion of the dinner receipts are donated to a specific charity. We are looking to schedule this dinner at the Kittle House in July or Aug. Suzanne Kavic is taking the lead on this.

The SMRA Birdathon will take place Oct 9–11 and will be opened this year to area bird clubs. We are looking to increase donations to SMRA and other organizations participating in the Birdathon.

We will be soliciting high quality bird and other nature photos which we plan to assemble in a 2021 calendar that will be sold to raise funds for SMRA.

Lynn has designed a SMRA card to handout at SMRA programs and other events. The card has QR codes to facilitate website access and donations.

Development Report—Valerie Lyle

[Reference handout: *Membership and Donation Report as of February. 3, 2020*]

There are currently 1,001 member households, including 516 SMRA chapter member households. The number of joint NAS/SMRA members has increased to 485 households.

Nominating Committee Report— Bill Kellner

The Nominating Committee has approved the following slates of candidates to be voted on by the board of directors at its next meeting, scheduled for March 2, 2020:

1. Board of Directors (3-year term to expire in March, 2023)—Cary Andrews, Ginger Bernardin, Suzanne Kavic, Kenneth Novenstern, Thomas Ruth, Richard Saravay, Kathleen Williamson, Debbie van Zyl
2. Board Officers (1-year term to expire in March, 2021)—Valerie Lyle (President), Thomas Ruth (Vice President), Thomas McEnerney (Treasurer), William Kellner (Recording Secretary), Richard Saravay (Board Chair).

Seed Sale— Ken Novenstern

The January third Saturday seed sale had revenues of \$446. The unseasonably warm weather appears to be having a negative impact on seed sales. A sign-up sheet was passed around for volunteers for the upcoming seed sale on Feb. 15.

Executive Director’s Report— Anne Swaim

The May Yellowstone trip is fully subscribed, as are the South Africa trip and Cape Ann weekend. We are looking to do at least one weekend trip each season of the year.

The annual Hudson River EagleFest will be held on Feb. 8. SMRA will have over two dozen volunteers at our three sites, including Verplanck dock. SMRA is one of only six participating groups to be on the EagleFest passport this year. Participating EagleFest attendees visit each of the passport tables to have their passports stamped. This should help increase traffic to our exhibit. We are planning to have large portraits of birds—visitors to the exhibit will be encouraged to take “selfies” with these portraits.

Executive Director's Report— Anne Swaim cont'd

This week Anne is doing a Birding 101 for Westchester County master gardeners. Also this week, Anne will conduct a Birding by Ear program for Rockland Audubon.

Numerous studies have documented the negative impacts that off-leash dogs have on wildlife in wildlife sanctuaries. Off-leash dogs have been an ongoing problem in the SMRA sanctuaries. Anne proposed that members of the public who want to walk their dogs in the sanctuaries be required to obtain a pass to be able bring their dog(s) to our sanctuaries. Applicants would have to agree to follow all sanctuary rules regarding dogs. The Town of New Castle Police will be informed about our dog pass policy. Ken moved that SMRA conduct a 1-year trial at the Pruyne Sanctuary to require dog walkers to obtain a pass. The pass will be issued to individual households; up to two dogs per household will be allowed. SMRA members will be offered a discount on the fee for a dog pass. Cary provided a second for this motion. The motion was approved by all present voting affirmatively with the exception of Phil, who was opposed.

Advocacy— Tom Ruth

At its January meeting the Advocacy Committee discussed the proposal to conduct a climate change leadership training program for committed adults by Boot Camp panel member Lindsay Auden. Rik is continuing his work on determining SMRA's carbon footprint, with the goal of finding ways to reduce our impact. We are looking to do an event on how food production and distribution affects our carbon footprint and the environment. The event will emphasize how what you eat and drink affects birds and habitat. We are exploring a partnership with Stone Barns on this effort.

Richard reminded board members that the NYS Audubon Chapters council will meet in Saratoga Springs in late April. The meeting will focus on Audubon's response to climate change.

Sanctuaries— Michael Madias, Jr.

Donna provided board members with a handout from NYS DEC on the Spotted Lanternfly, an invasive insect pest that attacks numerous species of trees. Although it has not yet reached the lower Hudson Valley, the lanternfly has been found in several Mid-Atlantic States. The lanternfly is a serious threat; sightings should be reported to the DEC.

A young neighbor of the Pruyne Sanctuary has volunteered to make new signs for the sanctuary. Michael thanked Phil for assisting with the inventory of needed signs.

The proposed sale of a parcel owned by the Village of Croton-on-Hudson in the Town of Cortlandt near our Brinton Brook Sanctuary has been canceled.

Woodchips that will be donated to SMRA from SavATree will be placed in our Choate and Pruyne Sanctuaries with assistant from Chappaqua cub scouts.

A collaborative grant received by SMRA from National Audubon will be used to conduct a course for trail maintainers. The date is March 28. The grant will also be used to make various improvements in our sanctuaries.

The Lower Hudson Partnership for Invasive Species Management (LH PRISM) will return to remove the invasive hardy kiwi vine at Brinton Brook Sanctuary this spring.

The rockwork at Split Rock Spring at Brinton Brook needs masonry work. Michael moved that the board of directors authorize spending up to \$3,000 for this masonry work. Cary provided a second for this motion, which passed with all present voting in the affirmative.

Programs and Field Trips— Debbie van Zyl

The following are upcoming programs and trips:

- * Feb. 8—Second Saturday walk at Brinton Brook Sanctuary
- * Feb. 13—South Africa talk and bird (and other wildlife) photo presentation at Croton Free Library
- * Feb 15–17—Cape Ann Birding weekend
- * Mar 19—Liz Cherry will talk about her new book, *For the Birds: Protecting Wildlife through the Naturalist Gaze* in a public program the Croton Free Library
- * Mar 24—SMRA's Nature Book Club will discuss Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*

Looking beyond March, we'll hold a birding trip to the Long Island shore in April (date and location TBD). Our Annual Dinner will be held on Apr. 5. On May 9 we'll participate in the Global Big Day with Putnam Highlands Audubon (ask Debbie for details). Our annual early morning trip to Doodletown for spring warblers and more will be held on May 7.

SMRA will host the NYSOA meeting in Sept. 2021. This well-attended meeting will require a lot of planning. We are looking for a venue with lodging. SMRA will lead field trips and collaborate with other Audubon chapters on various aspects of the program. This will be an "all hands on deck" initiative. All board members will be approached by Debbie to determine how they can best contribute to this effort.

Newsletter— Anne Swaim

The spring issue deadline was Feb. 1. We plan to get issue to the printer next week. The usual suspects will be asked for proofreading help.

Hospitality— Jean Sparacin

Jean thanked board members Larry and Ginger who supplied refreshments for tonight's meeting. Patricia Loquet received an honorable mention.

Adjournment—Valerie Lyle

Debbie moved that the meeting be adjourned; Rik seconded this motion. With all present voting in favor, Valerie adjourned the meeting at 8:46.