

**Saw Mill River Audubon**  
**August 3, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by Bill Kellner)**  
**Meeting conducted via Zoom**

**Present in bold type): Cary Andrews, Ginger Bernardin, Earl DePass, Louisa Gagliardi, Phil Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, Suzanne Kavic, Bill Kellner, Donna Lassiter, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Jr., 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: Ginger, Earl, Debbie

Meeting started at 7:02 pm.

**President's Report—Valerie Lyle**

It was noted that a quorum was present.

Suzanne moved that the board of directors approve the minutes for the board of directors meeting held on July 13, 2020. Phil seconded this motion. The motion approving the minutes was adopted unanimously.

Membership Report [Reference Membership and Donation Report as of Aug. 1, 2020]

Office Manager Ellen Heidelberger has completed the usual maintenance on our list of National Audubon and SMRA membership households by deleting those which are no longer current. As a result, the number of the National/SMRA joint membership households has declined. This has been partly offset by an increase in SMRA chapter only membership households. The current membership household numbers are 1,004 (455 National/SMRA and 549 SMRA chapter-only households).

SMRA's Annual Dinner, originally scheduled for April has been canceled. We will, however, hold a virtual Annual Meeting on Sunday, October 18 at 5:00 pm. The keynote speaker for this event will be David Ringer, Chief Network Officer of NAS. Other features of this online event are planned to include short video messages from some SMRA volunteers about their connection with SMRA. We will also have brief presentations by our Larry Light Youth Scholarship recipients for 2019 and 2020. And we will conduct the drawing to determine the winner of our quilt raffle. This year's beautiful quilt, entitled "Humdinger," was designed by master quilter Patricia Loquet. There will be an upcoming planning meeting for the virtual Annual Meeting. The date will be sent out to all board members. All are welcome to participate.

Val read a statement wishing Anne a happy birthday and thanking her for 31 years of dedicated service to Saw Mill River Audubon.

**Development Committee Report—Valerie Lyle**

We are still receiving donations from this year's highly successful Annual Appeal. Those who donate \$100 or more are receiving thank you calls from board members. See also Treasurer's Report, below.

**Finance Committee—Phil Heidelberger**

[Reference reports: Investment Portfolio and Asset Allocation—Mix July 1, 2020 *and* Investment Portfolio Performance Report for Period Ending June 30, 2020.]

For our official quarterly report, as of July 1, 2020 the portfolio balance was \$1,089,918, a \$61,231 (6.0%) increase above the January 1, 2020 balance of \$1,028,687. At the end of the second quarter the year-to-date, one year and three-year investment rates of return were -2.4%, 3.3% and 6.0% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of -3.6%, 1.0% and 3.7% for the same periods.

The portfolio balance on August 1, 2020 was \$1,131,222, a \$102,535 (10.0%) year-to-date increase. As of August 1, 2020, we are \$123,728 (193.1%) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted expenses in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds. However, that includes about \$33,000 in Mertz bequest funds that have not yet been invested but will likely be invested over the coming months. Excluding that \$33,000, we are \$90,394 (168.0%) above the guideline. There have been \$102,100 (the Mertz bequest plus a Light Scholarship donation) in additions to and \$13,000 in withdrawals from the portfolio during 2020

**Treasurer's Report—Tom McEnerney**

[Reference report: Operating Revenues and Expenses for 7 months ended July 31, 2020]

Budgeted revenue for the first 7 months of the year were about \$13,500 over expectations due primarily to higher donations and slightly higher seed sales, offset in part by lower education program revenue. Budgeted expenses for the same period were about \$4,600 lower than expectations due to lower sanctuaries, garden, advocacy and education program expenses.

This resulted in an operating profit of \$10,700 which was offset by unbudgeted expenses of about \$13,600. Unbudgeted revenue of \$7,300 and a \$13,000 withdrawal from the endowment resulted in the checking account balance increasing by \$17,445 since the beginning of the year.

Tom then referred to page two of his report and briefly described the items comprising off budget revenue and expenses. Adding the PPP loan to the checking account balance resulted in a total increase of \$33,682 since the beginning of the year.

Page two of his report also showed revenue for the first 7 months of 2020 as compared to revenues for 2019. Annual fund donations are up about \$17,000, or 60%, over last year. SMRA also received a \$10,000 matching grant this year for a donation made in 2019. As a result, total donations increased about \$25,000, or 58%, over last year. Total revenue was up about \$22,000, or 36%. Adding the matching grant funds from SMRA's anonymous donor, which SMRA expects to receive shortly, would result in total revenues for 2020 of about \$110,700, a 78% increase over last year.

**Fundraising Committee—Louisa Gagliardi**

We are working on producing a fundraising calendar with bird photos contributed by our top photographers. The calendar will also have information about SMRA and promote donations. The print run will probably be 100 at which level the cost per piece is \$16 to produce and mail. The sale price is anticipated to be around \$20.

Ken moved that the board approve proceeding with production and sale of the fundraising calendar, with the sale price of the calendar to be determined by the President. Suzanne seconded this motion, which was approved unanimously by the board.

The fall Birdathon has been scheduled for Oct. 9–11.

**Pruyn House—Anne Swaim**

We have scheduled a septic pump out for Pruyn House.

**Bird Seed Sale—Anne Swaim**

There is still some seed available for sale, including striped sunflower and thistle, as well as suet. Leftover seed is being offered for sale at a 50% discount.

The fall Seed Sale dates are Sep. 12–13. See the Seed Sale insert that will be included with the upcoming issue of the fall newsletter. All seed pickups will be done at Pruyn Sanctuary. We may add Sep. 11 as a third pickup day.

This year has seen a dramatic increase—up to 30%—on prices of some varieties of seed from our vendor. Treasurer Tom M. is assisting with planning the amount of seed we will order this year. We expect to have two deliveries to the seed shed: one before the September pickup weekend and another in January.

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

A virtual meeting was held with stakeholders of the Croton Point Park landscape restoration project. Participants included representatives of SMRA (Anne), Westchester County Parks, Teatown Lake Reservation (Charlie Roberto), Larry Weiner Landscape Associates and the Native Plant Center at Westchester Community College (Karalyn Lamb). The discussion included the possibility of extending funding beyond the expiration of the current grant, which is December 2020. Possibilities include securing funding to extend the project out to as long as 4 years. Also covered was failure to adhere to mowing guidelines with negative impacts on grassland nesting species, including Bobolink and Grasshopper Sparrow.

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

The white pines at the RV campground in Croton Point Park are not doing well. These trees may be infected with white pine rust. Charlie Roberto will be asking County Parks to address this issue.

Comments from Westchester County Audubon chapters and Friends of Marshlands about the issues at Marshlands Conservancy (see July 13 SMRA board meeting minutes) were received by New York State Parks and the Westchester County Parks. We are looking for a written response from the government agencies to clarify steps to involve stakeholders in the planning of any future landscape activities by the Jay Heritage Center including adding a representative to the Landscape Committee of the Jay Heritage Center. Richard raised the question of whether restoration of the habitat that has been damaged is possible. Anne said she would raise this question with Friends of Marshlands Conservancy.

**Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim**

We have six events scheduled for August, including our Summer Nature Skills Workshop on Aug. 20, in which Donna will discuss how to create beneficial habitat in your own yard for birds and pollinators by growing native plants.

There are three small group walks scheduled for the month of August; we are considering increasing the number of walkers to a maximum of ten. On Aug. 19, Anne will lead a small group walk at the Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

Former SMRA board member Christine McCluskey has asked Anne to present a Zoom “Raptors for Rookies” program for her Audubon chapter in Mecklenburg, North Carolina. Anne will also present a Zoom “Birding 101” program for the Greenburgh Public Library.

Please see the upcoming fall issue of the SMRA newsletter for our many walks and virtual programs to be held in September, October and November.

**Advocacy Committee Report—Tom Ruth**

We are working on a food use series consisting of 3 webinars under the umbrella name of “A Bird’s Eye View of Food.” The first webinar, focusing on local food sources, has been scheduled for September 23 with a discussion of local agriculture and its impact on the environment, including bird habitat. The second webinar will cover the environmental effects of how we consume food and how choices about what we eat have an impact—for example, plant-based diet vs meat consumption. Lastly, we’ll tackle how waste in food production and consumption is a significant component of greenhouse gas production.

The Advocacy Committee has selected three panelists for the Sep. 23 webinar: Jack Algieri, Farm Manager at Stone Barns, Pocantico Hills; Trish Vasta, Farm Manager at the Hemlock Hill Farm, Cortlandt Manor; and Linda Tarrant-Reid, Garden Administrator at the Lincoln Park Community Garden, New Rochelle. The Committee has held preliminary meetings with the two farm managers and is hoping to meet with Ms. Tarrant-Reid next week.

We are looking for three or four volunteers to participate in an in-depth program to be hosted by Lindsay Audin on the Mechanics of Carbon Reduction with the goal of training community leaders in the fight against climate change. Please contact Tom if interested.

Ken noted that Committee members participated in a webinar hosted by H2H (Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership) in which the Northeast Bird Habitat Conservation Initiative was discussed. This initiative will involve multiple Regional Conservation Partnerships, including H2H, as well as several Audubon groups in New York and New England.

**Sanctuaries Committee Report—Michael Madias, Jr.**

Phil is organizing the re-blazing of trails in the Graff Sanctuary, which will take place next week. Our Second Saturday walk at Brinton Brook Sanctuary will take place as scheduled on Aug. 8, with social distancing protocols in place. Finally, Tropical Storm Isaias is predicted to strike the region tomorrow. Board members are urged to submit trail walker reports if they come across any damage in the SMRA sanctuaries.

**Nature Book Club—Kathleen Williamson**

The Nature Book Club will meet Sept. 29 to discuss *View from Lazy Point* by Carl Safina.

**Newsletter—Anne Swaim**

The fall issue of the newsletter is being prepared. We hope to get it off to the printer within the next few days. The fall seed sale flyer will be included with the newsletter.

**Adjournment—Valerie Lyle**

Larry moved that Valerie adjourn the meeting; Lynn seconded this motion. With all present voting in favor, Valerie adjourned the meeting at 8:15 pm.