

**Saw Mill River Audubon**  
**October 6, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by William Kellner)**  
**Meeting held at the Croton Free Library, Croton-on-Hudson, NY**

Present (in **bold type**): **Erik Andersen, Cary Andrews, Ginger Bernardin, Mitchell Goldfarb, Philip Heidelberger, Suzanne Kavic, William Kellner**, Valerie Lyle, **Tom McEnerney, Michael Madias, Jr.**, Mark Magel, **Kenneth Novenstern**, Steve Rappaport, **Tom Ruth, Lynn Salmon**, Jean Sparacin, **Jennifer Stern**, Larry Trachtenberg, **Kathleen Williamson**. SMRA Executive Director **Anne Swaim** was also present.

Absent: Val, Mark, Steve, Jean, Larry

Meeting started at 7:05 PM.

**President's Report—Erik Andersen**

Erik, noting that a quorum was present, began the meeting.

Erik reported on the issue of the Pruyn Sanctuary neighbor, Dr. Yossi Haroush, who was prosecuted by the Town of New Castle for various environmental law violations and the related civil action filed by SMRA to recover damages to SMRA property. The default judgement in SMRA's favor has been vacated by the court, so we are back to square one. The defendant has done little to remediate the damage to SMRA property other than cosmetic camouflaging of some of the disturbance.

SMRA, having spent approximately \$35,000 on lawyer and arborist fees, needs to assess whether investing more resources would be worthwhile in light of the possibility that we may not be able to recover monetary damages. The subcommittee dealing with this matter will meet and make its recommendations to the board on how to proceed.

As far as Dr. Haroush's criminal conviction in Town Court for violations of the Town's environmental laws is concerned, things are also proceeding at a slow pace. The terms of the plea agreement between Dr. Haroush and the Town of New Castle have not been fully satisfied. The required bond is yet to be posted; the Town has given Dr. Haroush yet another extension until October 23 to post bond.

Anne noted that there is better news with the second Pruyn Sanctuary boundary issue with which SMRA is dealing. The sanctuary neighbor who has encroached on sanctuary property as detailed in the minutes of the June and September board meetings has been cited by the Town of New Castle for code violations regarding the improper installation of flood lights. The Town is requiring removal of the lights. The neighbor will need to apply for an Electrical Permit in advance of properly reinstalling lights on his side of the property line; the lights will need to shine inward, i.e., away from SMRA property.

Erik asked Anne to report on our upcoming year-end fund drive. Anne explained that donors who have contributed \$100 or more in previous years but have not yet donated this year will get personalized letters. These will be PS'd by board members who will be receiving packets with their assigned letters. Additionally, an email solicitation for donations will be sent to our full email list of approximately 3,500 names.

Erik, after asking if there were any changes to be made to the minutes of the September 8 board meeting, called for a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting as circulated.

Motion: To approve the minutes of the board of directors' meetings held on September 8, 2025 and as circulated. Motion by: Suzanne Kavic. Seconded by: Ken Novenstern. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

### **Finance Committee—Phil Heidelberger**

As of October 1<sup>st</sup>, the portfolio balance was \$1,564,439, which is an increase of 7.1% (\$104,120) YTD, an increase of 2.1% (\$32,898) for the month of September and an increase of 3.5% (\$53,439) for the Third Quarter. There have been no additions to, and \$56,125 of withdrawals from, the endowment during 2025. As of October 1, 2025, we are 23.9% (\$37,459) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted withdrawals in highly liquid assets such as checking, short-term CDs and money market funds.

### **Treasurer's Report—Bill Kellner for Lynn Salmon**

[Reference report: SMRA Operating Revenue and Expenses YTD–10/03/25]

Things look good. Our Annual Fund Drive numbers are close to what we expect based on the budget, and we expect them to increase toward year end. They include \$4,500 from board members toward a much needed refurbish of the Pruyn Office, which has fresh paint, new carpeting, and the rug really ties the room together.

Note that there was a typo on last month's Treasurer's report for Membership Revenue: The correct number as of 8/30/25 was \$6,885 and now member revenue is up to \$7,725 with quite a few people opting to renew their membership or become new members when buying bird seed in September.

New Bird Seed arrived in mid-September with pre-orders starting on August 29. Seed Sales in September were robust with \$7,300 received last month.

Expenses continue to be mostly as expected based on the budget, and/or last year's numbers.

The uptick in expenses in the Office Operations category was offset by the previously mentioned \$4,500 donations toward the office refurb costs.

Mark Magel continues to come in under budget while doing wonderful things in the Arboretum & Garden.

The increase in Bulletin expenses is from the addition of members from Central Westchester Audubon and our decision to send a printed newsletter mailing to all 1,400+ members.

The 2024 Annual Audit is essentially complete; we're waiting for our accountants to file our form 990, which is due by November 15.

We have received deposits from eight participants for the New Mexico birding trip; one person has paid in full.

There have been no additional expenditures toward the Pruyn boundary legal issue.

Budget Worksheets will be sent to committee members by the end of October so that the year-end budget can be prepared in November and presented to the board for approval at our December 1 board meeting. The Budget Committee will be meeting Friday, November 21<sup>st</sup> at Lynn's house.

### **Nominating Committee Report—Bill Kellner**

Board members in the class of 2026 will be receiving email queries at the end of 2025 or early 2026 asking them to confirm their interest in running for a new three-year term. Anne reminded the board the President and Vice President of Central Westchester Audubon Society (CWAS) have declined SMRA's invitation to join the SMRA board following the dissolution of CWAS and acquisition of CWAS' territory by SMRA. We currently

have a total of five vacancies on the SMRA board of directors.

### **Membership Report—Suzanne Kavic**

#### **[Reference Membership Report as of October 3, 2025.]**

With the current 619 SMRA chapter member households and 810 joint NAS/SMRA member households, total membership stands at 1,418. Transfer of joint NAS/CWAS member households to SMRA accounts for the increase in member numbers. Revenue from membership dues for chapter memberships so far in 2025 stands at \$7,272 (2025 budgeted goal is \$13,055).

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

Anne reported that the NAS monthly Chapter Change Report (CCR) on National members in our zip code area has not been updated with the transfer of CWAS members to SMRA. According to NAS, a new NAS member system is in the process of being implemented. When it goes live in mid-October, the former CWAS National memberships should be transferred to the SMRA CCR. Currently we have access to the CWAS CCRs so Barbara is processing them alongside the SMRA report.

SMRA will be participating in Cornell University's SnapshotNY program to monitor populations of mammals and other wildlife throughout the state. We have received a high-quality trail camera from SnapshotNY, which Anne has installed in the Pruyn Sanctuary.

Anne received a call from a woman who reported that she was followed by a coyote while walking her dogs in the Brinton Brook Sanctuary. The coyote was not deterred by the hazing that the walker did. While she expressed her concern about this incident, the caller was not overly upset. Anne explained that the coyote was probably engaging in "escorting" behavior to prevent disturbance of its den. The Rewilding School has been informed of this coyote encounter. The school has begun actively monitoring coyotes with its trail camera to see if coyotes are frequenting the entrance area.

On October 7 Anne will lead a program on birding at The Knolls in Valhalla, near Westchester Community College. Anne has presented similar programs for seniors in the recent past at the Philipse Manor Garden Club, Kendal on Hudson and the Atria in Ossining, in addition to presenting Zoom programs for a number of local libraries in the Westchester Library System. We are reaching new audiences with this expanded outreach.

SMRA's upcoming trip to New Mexico is fully subscribed. We are working with Charlie Roberto on planning a return to the Gaspé region of Québec to take place June 2–9, 2026.

While revenue from school programs has fallen short of our budgeted goal, we are pleased that revenues are approaching \$10,000—we have made up much of the shortfall caused by New York State's defunding of program fees reimbursable under the Connect Kids to Parks program.

### **Advocacy Committee—Tom Ruth**

Tom discussed several issues which the Advocacy Committee is focusing on:

1. Impact of rodenticides on raptor populations. SMRA is presenting a program on October 9 at the Chapqua Library focusing on this issue. Anne will review the local species potentially affected by rodenticides after which veterinarian Laura Jaworski will speak on our local owls. Dr. Jaworski's presentation will feature live owls. Finally, Pace University Professor Michelle Land will go into detail about how rodenticides are harming local hawks, eagles and owls.
2. Another program will cover the impacts of invasive plants on bird populations. The program, entitled "Are Invasive Plants Really Bad for Birds?," will feature Chad Seewagen, Executive Director of the Great Hollow Preserve & Ecological Center. The scheduled date is February 18, 2026 for this Zoom webinar.

3. The Horseshoe Crab Protection Act, which passed in the state legislature in late 2024, was vetoed by Governor Hochul. A revised bill has passed this year. While awaiting the governor's decision, we are supporting a concerted effort to influence her to sign the bill.
  4. The Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act has passed in the State Senate this year but has not been acted on by the Assembly.
  5. The Committee is looking into the proposal by Reflect Orbital to launch thousands of mirrors into earth orbit with the goal of increasing the amount of sunlight reaching earth to increase generation of solar power. Resulting longer days and shorter nights could have negative impacts on birds and other wildlife.
- Tom asked Kathleen to discuss the showing of the film "Tide and Time—An Intimate Portrait of Jamaica Bay's 85-year Old Guardian." This will be a Films on Purpose presentation at the Chappaqua Library on November 12. Don Riepe, the subject of the film, will be there in person as will the filmmakers.

Kathleen also mentioned the growing problem of artificial lighting in our communities. This has been a focus in the past of the Advocacy Committee because of its negative impacts on bird and insect populations. Suzanne described improper use of lighting in residential neighborhoods; Kathleen discussed bright outdoor lighting used in municipal sporting complexes in her town.

#### **Bird Seed Sale—Tom McEnerney**

Our upcoming seed sale/pickup day is scheduled for October 19, please let the office know if you can help Tom McEnerney at the sale. We're off to a good start this season, although we do face a price increase on sunflower seed.

Anne noted that the upcoming winter may feature a southward irruption of northern finches (e.g., Crossbills, Pine Siskins, Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches) and other bird species (e.g., Red-breasted Nuthatches, Redpolls) that typically are not seen in large numbers as far south as our region.

#### **Sanctuaries—Michael Madias**

Prolonged drought has impacted the vegetation (and the trails) in our sanctuaries. A muted fall foliage season is expected because of the dry weather.

#### **Pruyn House—Ginger Bernardin**

Installation of new carpeting is completed, including edging. An additional expenditure of \$500 was necessary to cover the edging. The office has been painted and new chairs and a new computer purchased because of generous board member donations.

#### **Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim**

Anne urged board members to consider attending the local field trip to the State Line Overlook in the Palisades Interstate Park on October 10. From our perch on top of the Palisades we'll be able to look down on migrating and resident raptors as they move down the Hudson.

#### **SMRA Nature Book Club—Kathleen Williamson**

We'll be meeting on Zoom on November 11 to discuss Wade Davis' *Magdalena: River of Dreams*.

#### **Newsletter—Jenni Stern**

The deadline for our winter issue is November 1.

#### **Adjournment—Erik Andersen**

Motion: Erik shall adjourn the meeting. Motion by: Cary Andrews. Seconded by: Ginger Bernardin. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively). Erik adjourned the meeting at 8:00 PM.