

Saw Mill River Audubon
January 5, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by William Kellner)
Meeting held on Zoom

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

Absent: Steve, Michael, Mark

Meeting started at 7:02 PM.

President's Report—Erik Andersen

Erik, noting that a quorum was present, began the meeting. He called attention to the dates for upcoming meetings of the board of directors listed at the bottom of the agenda for tonight's meeting, noting that the February meeting date shown (Feb. 9) represents a change from the originally scheduled February date.

SMRA's Annual Dinner will be held at Mariandale on April 29. Attendees will be capped at 100 due to space limitations at this venue. Erik reminded board members to continue to sell tickets for the quilt raffle to be held at the dinner. Anne said a keynote speaker has been selected: Jim Wright, author of a new book about the Peregrine Falcon.

Erik, after asking if there were any changes to be made to the minutes of the December 1, 2025 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 December 1, 2025 and as circulated. Motion by: Philip Heidelberg. Seconded by: Larry Trachtenberg. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Finance Committee—Phil Heidelberg

As of January 1, 2026, the portfolio balance was \$1,571,830, which is an increase of 7.6% (\$111,511) for the year of 2025, an increase of 0.7% (\$11,384) for the month of December and an increase of 0.5% (\$7,391) for the Fourth Quarter. There were no additions to, and \$87,674 of withdrawals from, the endowment during 2025. As of January 1, 2025 we are 71.4% (\$133,504) 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—Lynn Salmon

[Reference report: SMRA Operating Revenue and Expenses YTD—12/31/25]

The numbers in the above-referenced Operating Revenue and Expenses Report are not quite final as additional revenue is still to be added from monies sent to us at the end of the year that aren't here yet, and details for some of our 2025 expenses are not yet finalized.

However, it looks like we had another very good end of year for annual fund donations. When the 2026 Budget was prepared in mid-November of 2025 there was concern that our Annual Fund numbers at that time were only a little over \$51,000. However, we received an additional \$30,000 by year's end and can expect another \$2,000–\$3,000 to come by the end of this week.

Annual Bird Seed Sale revenue shown in the Report includes \$7,406 from sales of seed delivered in fall 2024 made during the first half of the year. Revenue from new seed delivered in fall 2025 is \$12,047. This is slightly higher than for the same time last year (September–December) but seed costs were higher this season.

Membership renewals were a bit lower than the previous year. We might still expect a handful more to come this week with people's end of year donations. We did receive an additional \$1,533 from National Audubon Society (NAS), reflecting additional members from CWAS that we picked up in 2025. This will be our annual amount from NAS going forward (see also Executive Director's Report, below).

School Program revenue for the year was lower than hoped for, but similar to the previous year. Expenses for 2025 were all close to budgeted amounts.

The uptick in expenses in the Office Operations category was offset by a previously-mentioned \$4,500 in multiple donations for the costs of carpeting, paint, new chairs and a new desktop computer, previously reported at the October 2025 board meeting.

Increases in Sanctuary expenses are primarily from requiring more hours from Dan Ferguson for various issues, especially increased high wind events felling sanctuary trees.

Anne will be leading a January 2026 Birding trip to New Mexico with nine participants. Trip payments and donations for this trip have been received, and most expenses paid in advance, but numbers are not yet final.

The Pruyn Boundary Legal expenses have ended. Final tally: \$34,973.72.

Membership Report—Suzanne Kavic

[Reference Membership Report as of January 5, 2026.]

With the current 604 SMRA chapter member households and 788 joint NAS/SMRA member households, total membership stands at 1,392. Revenue from membership dues for chapter memberships totaled \$11,968 in calendar year 2025; the budgeted goal for 2025 was \$13,055. We have added approximately 320 new chapter members, mostly because of the CWAS merger. Anne explained that the lower-than-budgeted revenue for chapter membership dues is in part explained by SMRA continuing membership through the end of 2025 for CWAS chapter members acquired by SMRA.

Cary noted that several of these new members who came in from CWAS have been attending SMRA's local birding walks. Phil asked whether any of these walks are taking place in what was formerly CWAS territory. Anne replied in the affirmative, citing walks at Cranberry Lake and Saxon Woods as well as our ongoing walks at the Marshlands Conservancy and Edith G. Read Wildlife Sanctuary.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim

SMRA's Annual Report for NAS has been submitted. Anne submitted a separate report for CWAS. Baseline payments from NAS to SMRA now received total \$5,074.50, of which \$1,535.75 is the baseline payment for the newly-acquired CWAS membership. Baseline payments for the last 20+ years have been an unchanging annual amount based on a past tally of chapter members; formerly chapters received a stipend per chapter member and that practice was discontinued and a fixed baseline payment determined. Anne also noted that National Audubon said at a recent membership webinar that the concept of baseline payments is being reevaluated with changes expected to be announced within the next two years.

SMRA is again a sponsor and supporter of Teatown's EagleFest, to be held on February 7. Anne called attention to the volunteer sign-up sheet that was included in tonight's meeting packet sent to board members. The

sheet lists shift times for the main exhibit tent at Croton Point County Park and the two SMRA-sponsored warming tents at the Eagle viewing sites (Croton-Harmon Station boat ramp and George's Island County Park).

Turning to upcoming SMRA trips, the trip to Ohio's Magee Marsh, scheduled for May 17–22, is now fully subscribed. Scheduled dates for our return to Panamá are November 10–21.

There are about 30 unsold SMRA 2026 calendars remaining. These will be distributed as a “thank you” to our higher level donors. In terms of retail sales outlets for the calendar, not many sold at the Village Bookstore in Pleasantville but Feed the Birds in Croton did quite well, selling about 18 calendars. Erik suggested we thank Zeiss Optics for their support; Anne expressed support for this idea and said she would reach out to Zeiss.

Advocacy Committee—Tom Ruth

Last month Governor Hochul signed the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act. It's been a long road to achieve this result; the Advocacy Committee would like to thank board members who called and wrote the Governor. In a signing statement, the Governor made some modifications to the act, including a three-year phase-in of the act's provisions. Overall, we are pleased with this outcome, especially considering Hochul's veto of the previous version of the bill at the end of 2024.

Join us at Teatown on January 31 for a special program co-sponsored by SMRA and Teatown, “the Wonders and Perils of Bird Migration” featuring Greg Repasz of Lights Out Connecticut. To register, see the SMRA events calendar for a link to the sign-up page. Anne noted that SMRA will have an exhibit table at the event.

The Committee's next program will be a Zoom webinar that will take place on February 18. The program, entitled “Are Invasive Plants Really Bad for Birds—It Depends?” will feature Chad Seewagen, Executive Director of the Great Hollow Preserve & Ecological Center.

The Advocacy Committee is scheduled to meet (on Zoom) on January 21.

Bird Seed Sale—Tom McEnerney

Profit from sale of seed in calendar year 2025 was approximately \$3,300 as shown in the SMRA Operating Revenue and Expenses Report YTD–12/31/25 (see Treasurer's Report, above). As \$1,300 was deducted from our total profit to account for seed donated by SMRA to Project FeederWatch and used in Pruyn Sanctuary feeders, our real profit was more like \$4,600. Also, a more logical way to account for seed sale on an annual basis would be to look at the seed sale year from September 1, 2024 through August 31, 2025. This puts the purchase of seed and its subsequent sale in the same fiscal year. Using these dates, our profit for sale of seed would be about \$7,300.

A couple of additional notes: we've had to raise our prices for seed based on higher costs for seed in our fall 2025 order. And, taking inventory of seed on hand, we found we were short 20 bags. This appears to be a delivery issue; we will take this up with our supplier, Truffa Seed.

Sanctuaries—Anne Swaim for Michael Madias

SMRA's annual deer management program for 2025 has concluded. Our vetted hunters harvested five deer—three at Brinton Brook Sanctuary and two at Pruyn.

Erik asked about the Pruyn Sanctuary neighbor, Sultanik, who has encroached on sanctuary property and has been cited by the Town of New Castle for code violations regarding the improper installation of flood lights. Anne said the Town is still pursuing these violations and that the investigation is ongoing.

Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim

Anne called attention to the programs she will present for SMRA on Winter Birding to be held January 6 at the Greenburgh Public Library and on Zoom on January 15. On Sunday January 11 Anne will present this program again in Cold Spring under the sponsorship of the Putnam Highlands Audubon Society.

Board members were asked to help when possible on SMRA's local walks and trips. Let Anne know your availability. Our January 10 Eagle Walk will be led by Larry Trachtenberg and Kyle Bardwell, starting at the Croton-Harmon Station boat ramp and continuing at Croton Point Park. SMRA's popular Soup Gathering will take place following the Eagle Walk at the Nature Center in Croton Point Park. Anne asked for volunteers to bring soup for this event; several board members announced they would be bringing a variety of hot soups.

Asked to report on project FeederWatch held every Sunday at the Nature Center, Val said things have been going well and that January 4 had an especially good turnout.

Finally, Anne encouraged board members to consider joining us on the annual Dutchess Golden Eagle trip on February 12 or the Shawangunk Grasslands field trip on January 22; see the event calendar to sign up.

SMRA Nature Book Club—Kathleen Williamson

We've can now confirm that the book club will meet on Zoom on February 17 to discuss David Quaman's *Song of the Dodo: Island Biogeography in an Age of Extinctions*. We're excited to have two special guests: book author David Quaman as well as John Rasmus. John, a former editor-in-chief of *Outside* magazine, began publishing Quaman's work in 1981.

Newsletter—Jenni Stern

The deadline for our spring issue is February 1. Let Jenni know if you have any submissions or ideas for the issue.

New Business—Erik Andersen

Erik asked whether our hunters in the deer management program made any comments on the health of deer they harvested. Anne replied that while the harvested deer appeared healthy, two hunters reported that the deer population appears to be lower than expected. According to Anne, this may be related to the spread of epizootic hemorrhagic disease in the white-tailed deer population. Anne also noted that there is reporting that Great Horned Owls are being affected by bird flu.

Cary reminded board members that she will host SMRA's annual funding raising Birding Tea on June 13.

Adjournment—Erik Andersen

Motion: Erik shall adjourn the meeting. Motion by: Cary Andrews. Seconded by: Larry Trachtenberg. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively). Erik adjourned the meeting at 7:55 PM.