

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board
Williamsburg Bird Club
November 12, 2015**

Conference Room, Human Services Building, 5249 Old Town Road, Williamsburg

Board Member Attendees: Geoff Giles, Shirley Devan, Judy Jones, Cathy Millar, Jeanette Navia, Cheryl Jacobson, Judy Jones

Board Members Absent: Ann Carpenter

Chair Attendees: Jim Corliss, Bill Williams, Jan Lockwood, Jeanette Navia

Chair Attendees Absent: Lee Schuster, Ruth Gordon, Tom McCary

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Geoff Giles who noted that a quorum was present and distributed an agenda for tonight's meeting.

Secretary's Report – Cathy Millar: Minor corrections were made to the minutes of the July 8th meeting after which Judy moved that they be accepted and Cheryl seconded. All were in favor. Cathy will email the corrected version to Board members.

Cathy gave Jeanette a cd on which were written all the minutes of all the Board and Monthly Meetings from November 2012 to the present for the purpose of updating meeting records on the WBC web site.

Treasurer's Report – Ann Carpenter was not present: Copies of a current spread sheet that Ann had prepared were distributed and reviewed. It was noted that we have a balance of \$14,455 in the checking account as well as 2 CD's totalling \$5,456. Pending expenses listed were (1) November speaker - \$75 (2) November and December Newsletter - ? (3) Administrative costs for Nature Camp Scholarships - ? (4) possible catering costs for Bird Count compilation- ? (5) CDR bird seed - ? and (6) WBC PO Box - \$56. Geoff noted that the bottom line was that the club was more solvent this year largely due to donations made in Ruth Beck's name and that the use of that money as well as Bird Count catering would be discussed later on the agenda. There were no questions regarding income and expenses.

President's Report – Geoff Giles:

- **CVWO Board** Geoff reported that we were given the opportunity by CVWO to appoint a representative from the WBC to their board. The opportunity was announced at the last membership meeting and there was only one volunteer willing to accept all the duties of the position, W&M student Matt Anthony, who has now been officially appointed. Brian Taber is delighted to have someone with young energetic ideas and who is tech savvy. Matt is very active in the William & Mary Bird Club and is interested in our having a W&M student representative on our Board. Shirley voiced concern that students aren't here for long, but Geoff reported that Matt expects to be here for 4 more years as he pursues his PhD. Geoff noted that the W&M Bird

Club has currently approximately 100 members of varying levels of interest and expertise with Nick Newberry spearheading the club's activities. The club is grooming Megan Massa to succeed Nick when he graduates. Matt is very interested in assuring the survival of the W&M Bird Club and thinks that having a rep on our Board will help them better understand how a bird club works. A discussion followed in which Janette proposed the idea of creating another Member-at-Large position for a student representative from the W&M Bird Club. Cheryl added that the students would be responsible for choosing the representative. Jim enquired if this would necessitate a change in our bylaws. Geoff asked Bill how the offices and chairpersons had initially been determined. Bill said the VSO had provided a template when the WBC was formed. Shirley said that our bylaws state that a nominating committee is supposed to formally nominate the nominees to be elected. Elections are at our membership meeting next week (Nov. 18). Bill thought it was not necessary that the request for a student rep on our Board be formalized. He expressed concern that if we formalize the office in our bylaws, 5-6 years from now we may find that students are no longer as interested. He suggested sending an invitation whenever a Board meeting is being called. This was met with general agreement and Geoff said that at next week's meeting he will announce that we will be inviting the W&M Bird Club to send a representative to our Board meetings.

- Geoff asked whether Matt as our representative to the CVWO should have a Committee Chair on our Board. Bill recommended that the position be treated as an ad hoc committee. Shirley voiced the opinion that the more contact that our club has with the CVWO and the W&M Bird Club the better. Jeanette expressed concern that Matt is not on our WBC membership list. Geoff reminded us that all W&M Bird Club members were given complimentary membership in our club. The importance of at least having the student rep's email address on our membership list was noted. Shirley also noted the importance of the W&M Bird Club maintaining their separate identity and not becoming a branch of our club. Geoff will extend the invitation to Matt to attend our Board meetings.
- **Meeting times & order of meetings.** Membership meeting time and order of meetings was next on the agenda. Geoff reported that there is a consensus of membership approval to have the meetings start at 7 pm rather than 7:30. Cheryl reported that Dan Cristol has the room reserved up until Dec and will need to submit a new request in January 2016. He has yet to report the availability of the room at an earlier time.

Geoff noted that there has been interest expressed to change the order of membership meetings so that the program is held first and then followed by club business. Only a greeting of new members and visitors would precede the program. Shirley thought more people would come as they would not need to stay as late. Cheryl thought it would be more respectful to our speakers. Cheryl asked how much time the program speaker should have. It was generally agreed that 45 minute program plus 15 minutes for questions be allowed. Timeline of typical meeting would accordingly be program from 7-8pm and 8-8:30 for business meeting followed by refreshments. Bill added a request that the speakers be introduced with a fuller background bio. There were no objections to the proposed changes. Geoff therefore made the motion that the meeting time be moved to 7pm (pending Dan's report of room availability) and that the

order of meetings put the program first. Judy and Jan seconded the motion and approval was unanimous.

- **Upcoming Elections.** Geoff reported that he has not heard any nominations other than our current slate and that current officers are willing to continue. He asked if we needed to formally appoint a nominating committee. Shirley and Jan recommended that as there are no new nominees that Geoff present the slate at the meeting and ask if there are any new nominees from the floor.
- **Used Book Sale.** Geoff thought that some folks had unfairly taken a lot of books without making an adequate contribution of books or money at the previous used book event and wanted to make it more equitable at the sale this coming week. Judy volunteered to send out a reminder to the membership to bring books and magazines and that \$2 would be expected for hardcover books and \$1 for softcover books and no cost for used magazines. Jan, Judy and Shirley will collect the money.
- **Refreshments.** Discussion arose after a comment was made that members are disappointed by the dial back in snack variety. There was general consensus that members are satisfied and staying for conversation. A request for folks to sign up for snacks will be made at the next meeting with emphasis that refreshments have been simplified.

Committee Reports:

- **Field Trips – Jim Corliss:**

November: Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge

December: Christmas Bird Count in lieu of field trip

January: Dutch Gap

January or February: Chesapeake Bay Boat Trip

February: Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

March: Curle's Neck

April: Dismal Swamp with Bob Ake

May: Highland County

- **Programs – Cheryl Jacobson:**

November: Patti Reum from the VSO to talk about the Kestrel Nest Box Project.

December: No meeting.

January: Nick Newberry presents Olive-sided Flycatcher based on his summer project in Alaska. He has been asked to expand it to include local Flycatchers. Matt Anthony will present his summer project in Maryland.

February or March: Checking for availability of Brian Watts to speak on mortality of birds particularly Eagles, Ospreys and Peregrines and how that impacts their ability to sustain their population.

April: Presentations by W&M students who have received this year's grants from our club.

May: Bob Schermerhorn has a new presentation on Warblers that combines photos and birdsong.

- **Refreshments – Jan Lockwood:** Jan had nothing new to add to that which was discussed under the President's Report. Restated that members will be encouraged to sign up at the upcoming meeting.
- **Membership – Jeanette Navia:** Jeanette reported one new member with a current membership total of 156 including complimentary members and husband & wife members.

Old Business

- **W&M Research Grants.** Geoff noted that last year we gave 4 research grants of \$599 each to W&M students from the Bill Sheehan -Ruth Beck Ornithology Research Grant Fund and did we want to offer 4 this year. The fourth last year was awarded to a worthy undergraduate which is not the normal. Cheryl thought we should offer 4 if there are qualified students. Geoff noted that Dan Cristol is responsible for screening the students and Shirley noted that last year only 3 graduate students submitted proposals. Geoff proposed that we vote on accepting 4 if there are 4 qualified applicants and inform the Biology Dept. Judy moved and Jeanette seconded that we offer 4 research grants. Approval was unanimous.
- **Nature Camp.** Shirley has done an admirable job of being in charge of the Nature Camp Scholarships for many years and is now passing the position to Judy Jones. Judy reported that she would like to send out a general announcement requesting 4 volunteers to serve on the selection committee. In response to her hope that some of previous members would want to serve again Jan, Geoff and Cheryl volunteered. Judy also wanted to accelerate the process. Previously it was started in January and the student selected in February. Judy hopes to start the process now by getting the committee together as soon as possible and sending out the applications by around Thanksgiving and giving the schools until the middle of November to mid- December to get the applications in. The timing will prevent conflict with exams in January. Judy also noted that Shirley had always very kindly absorbed the cost of stamps, envelopes, labeling and Xeroxing which amounted to about \$75. She has spoken to our Treasurer, Ann, and that she said there is money available for paying for administrative costs. This was agreed to by the Board. Judy asked how many scholarships we wanted to offer this year. Shirley explained that last year we selected 2 but one had already accepted a scholarship from another organization. Further unsuccessful efforts were made to find another student. She then had asked the camp to recommend someone who needed a scholarship and a student from Williamsburg was identified. Therefore we ended up funding a student that didn't go through our application process. Judy reported that starting next year there are tentative plans to have the Native Plant Society, Master Naturalists and WBC submit joint applications to prevent students from being overwhelmed by offers from multiple clubs. A screening committee would be formed from all 3 clubs.

Geoff has asked that selected students come to our May meeting to say 'Hi' and then return in September to give a 5-6 minute talk about their experience. If agreeable, Judy would add this to the application.

Geoff proposed that we offer 3 scholarships. Shirley noted that the money from Wild Birds Unlimited goes to the scholarships which annually covers about the cost of 1 ½ scholarships and private donations toward scholarships covers almost another 1 ½ . So that totals 3 scholarships almost already funded.

Jan moved that we offer 3 scholarships; seconded by Cathy. Motion accepted unanimously.

- **Bill Sheehan/Ruth Beck Fund:** Geoff reported that the fund has received \$5,500 in contributions. We haven't committed the funds. Most of the contributions were labeled as contributions to the club's scholarship support of graduate students doing research in ornithology. Geoff had talked to Dan Cristol as to how we could use this fund in Ruth's spirit. Dan had recommended that we should partly use this fund to support our current scholarship fund if it is lacking sufficient money. He also thought Ruth would be happy to fund refreshments for the Bird Counts. Dan had said he would give it further consideration.

Shirley reminded the Board that Ruth's obituary said that those wishing to remember Ruth please send contributions to the WBC specifically toward the Bill Sheehan/Ruth Beck Ornithology Research Grant Fund which benefits W&M ornithology graduate students. Geoff noted that other donations were made in memory of Ruth that had nothing to do with the scholarships. Judy declared that since we have a comfortable \$14,455 in our checking account, she preferred that money be drawn from that for Bird Count refreshments rather than using the Ruth Beck Fund. Shirley, Cheryl and Bill agreed.

Bill proclaimed that the intent for the use of the money has always been academic. He went on to describe how Ruth would have been really pleased to have supported the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas project. This 5 year project is already underway with a director having been hired in October and with field work starting in early 2016. The goal is to officially have data arriving via eBird on March 1st. The bird clubs are going to be asked to provide the people for the field work. The VSO is going to mount a publicity campaign for donations from independent organizations. When the project was approved by the VA Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries, there was expectation that there would be matched money. One particular need for money that was part of the grant expectation but not funded was an educational component. Bill quoted the VSO's current byline of *Conservation through Education*. Noting that Ruth's life was devoted to 3 breeding bird projects here in Tidewater VA, he felt that this project matched her spirit and the sort of thing she devoted her energy and expertise to.

Geoff asked how much money was expected. Bill didn't have the specifics with him but said that the VSO is expected to provide an educational outreach component with a proposed 5 year budget of \$75,000. Bill will be meeting with the executive director of the executive committee of the VA Association of Science Teachers in January as part of the effort to find how funds can be best allocated. The project gets people to think of such questions as what birds breed in a specific area, how can it be proved, how does the data compare from year to year. Participating in a breeding bird atlas project is completely different from the usual birding field trip and he proposed the club doing a spring field trip for this purpose. There will be a training component.

Bill summarized that this is an opportunity for us to use some of the WBC money regardless of which fund is tapped.

It was agreed to currently leave the Ruth Beck money untouched in the bank to be available until specific need is targeted.

Bird Counts – venue and catering: Bill has secured a facility that has tables and wall outlets at the Jamestown Marina for compiling the results of this year's Christmas Bird Count.

Refreshments for about 30 people have previously been supplied by Carrot Tree. After much discussion, it appeared that crockpots with chili or Brunswick stew and hot cider was preferred to platters of Subway sandwiches. Bill said he would talk to his wife, Arlene, whether she could help coordinate the refreshments. Bill would also research the possibility of the aide of a secret Santa. In the meantime, it was agreed to have a donation of \$5 per participant at the door and have the bird club cover any expenses not covered. Geoff said the treasurer would be authorized to forward any needed funds to get the preparations underway.

Bill reported that he is in the process of handing his role as coordinator of the Christmas and Spring Birds Count to Jim Corliss who is now officially on the Audubon site. As of the Spring Bird Count, all info will go to Jim. Next year will be our 40th consecutive Christmas Count. Brian Taber and Bill have participated in every one.

New Business:

- **Virginia Bluebird Society.** Jan Lockwood was congratulated at the Master Naturalists for her good work with Lois Ullman in the Bluebird program and we gratefully recognized her too.
- **Kestrel Nest Box Program.** Geoff noted that our club's speaker, Patti Reum, will no doubt suggest that we sponsor kestrel boxes and should we buy some. He was aware of 1 box already being donated by the owner, Melinda Cousins, of the *Backyard Birder*. It was noted that she be publicly thanked at the next meeting. Cheryl and Geoff have found an open appropriate site at the New Kent Forestry Center where there is even a cherry picker to place the box high enough. Shirley said that Patti wanted to know if she should bring some boxes with her to the meeting. Geoff recommended that we commit to adding 4 more nest boxes. We don't know what the cost is for the boxes and poles and will see what Patti recommends.
- **Scientific Product Grant. (1)** Geoff reported that Wildlife Acoustic Scientific Product Grant had sent him info saying that interested people working for tax exempt nonprofit organizations are eligible for up to \$500 worth of free bioacoustics recording technology by submitting conservation ideas. Geoff will give this info to the W&M Bird Club as they are looking for acoustic equipment to help them study the Saw Whet Owls on campus.
(2) Ethan Schmerling contacted our bird club to see if we would advertise their scientific research project funded by the National Science Foundation at the psych dept. of Vanderbilt University to see if members would like to participate in a study of birder expertise and the factors that contribute to birder expertise. They are looking for birders of all skill levels who would be willing to take birding id tests. Judy recommended putting an article with their link in our December and/or January newsletter.

- Judy checked the appropriateness of sending a joint notice to the membership reminding them that Project Feeder Watch starts Nov 14th, as well as the request for one volunteer to join the committee to screen Nature Camp applications, and to bring books and magazines to the upcoming Used Book Sale. It was highly approved.
- Geoff asked Shirley about the new CVWO Ruth Beck Research Fund. Ruth had been VP of CVWO. Shirley said that we have the option of making our annual 2016 donation of \$200 to the general CVWO fund or the Ruth Beck fund or splitting the money between the funds or adding more money. This will be discussed further at the next Board meeting in 2016.

Geoff adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Millar, secretary,
Williamsburg Bird Club
November 16, 2015