

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board

Williamsburg Bird Club

November 27, 2017

Bill Williams's home, 154 Lakewood Drive, Williamsburg, VA

Board Member Attendees: Bill Williams, Cheryl Jacobson, Cathy Millar, Geoff Giles

Board Members Absent: Judy Jones, Ann Carpenter, Gary Carpenter, Deane Gordon,

Chair Attendees: Shirley Devan, Jim Corliss, Bill Williams, Nancy Barnhart, Jan Lockwood

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

The meeting was called to order by President Bill Williams at 1pm.

Secretary's Report – Cathy Millar: There had been minor revisions made after the first review when emailed earlier. The revised minutes were approved by the Board without any further additions or corrections.

Treasurer's Report – Ann Carpenter: In Ann's absence, a copy of the current spread sheet that Ann had made was reviewed showing a total income in 2017 of \$10674 and total expenses of \$12318 with an overage of minus \$1644. In her email, Ann had asked that we note that Calendar Year 2017 outstanding expenses are \$40 for seed for CDR, \$70 for the December Flyer and \$200 (or less) for Christmas Bird Count Compilation Meeting expenses. Bill said he'd take responsibility for there being an overage as a lot of it was due to expenses incurred by the club's 40th anniversary celebrations, esp. for food for the picnic. The treasurer's report was approved by consensus and the spread sheet was added to the minutes.

Bird Counts – Jim Corliss: Jim was still waiting for confirmation of the building for the meeting for the Christmas Bird Count. He noted that he will stay within the budget of \$200. Volunteers have been placed in teams and preparations for the CBC are progressing as expected.

Old and New Business:

- **Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services:** Bill reported that via our club's web site, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services made an enquiry on September 19th stating that the club had not turned in its registration and requested our Articles of Incorporation. Ann Carpenter responded to the initial request that we are not a corporation. This subsequently led to a letter addressed to Bill via the web site. He called the department to try to clarify this new situation and was told they'd call back but had not prior to this meeting.
- **Walkie Talkies:** Cathy Millar reported that there has been interest in the club having a set of walkie talkies for field trips that involve there being a caravan of cars from which we bird. A need has been observed for folks in one vehicle to be able to easily communicate birds of interest to the rest. Bill posed the question of should we purchase them, and if so, what should we get and then who would be responsible for them. Cathy had already done some research

and reported on the range of prices. It was thought that 6-8 walkie talkies should be purchased and once acquired would be kept (and charged) by the Field Trip Chairperson. Cathy Millar volunteered to continue research and inform the Board of results and with their approval, purchase them.

- **Nature Camp:** Bill reported that Lee Schuster is out of town but that she had reported to him that the collective group of people from the organizations that give out the scholarships had met and made their allocations and that Lee now needs to follow-up with the students to make sure that they actually apply. All the selected students this year are first timers. Cheryl made the suggestion that the students that are recipients of our scholarships be invited to come once in the fall to report on their experiences and be invited to stay for the rest of the meeting to become more acquainted. It was proposed that the spring visit be omitted. There was no further discussion.
- **William & Mary Research Grants:** Bill stated that one of the top issues of the agenda in the new year will be to decide how many grants the club offers in 2018.
- **Anniversary Celebration Activities:** Bill reported that he'd sent a note to the person he'd worked with from Smoke BBQ in Newport News to thank her for the quality of food and excellent service. The celebrations were deemed a complete success. Only disappointment was the low attendance of only 38 people at the picnic.
- **New Officers and Committee Chairpersons:** Bill enquired for the record on the status of officers and chairpersons for 2018. Lee Schuster will continue as Library Liaison. Barbara Neis will be in charge of refreshments. She will need a helper and Cheryl will check to see if Barbara wants to recruit one herself. Nancy Barnhart reported that all the committee positions are filled.
- **Public School Assistance:** Bill reminded us that the bird club had been contacted by a teacher, Helen McLain, at Laurel Lane Elementary School/Rawls Byrd and that he had met with her in September. She had applied for and received a grant and wants input from us on the best way to use that money and guide her in developing a program about birds for 3rd to 5th graders. She plans to have students do investigative research. She has also reached out to Dan Cristol and Bryan Watts. There are already some feeders and bird houses around the perimeter of the campus. Bill had subsequently talked to a couple of people in the bird club who were going to follow up with her. Bill had recently learned that that had not happened. Noting that a major topic of conversation at the last VSO Board meeting was how to get and keep young people interested in birding, he stressed that the club needs to get back to her. Deane and Patty Maloney are active in a group that meets at Tabb Elementary and they had said they would get in touch with the lady in charge of that group. Bill will follow up with Deane and ask how we can proceed. Bill noted that Lee Schuster helps out at Waller Mill Elementary School so we have an opening in a York County school. He expressed disappointment that we don't have a foothold in a single Williamsburg James City County Public School and that there wasn't a single submission from any of those schools for our 40th anniversary art contest.

Jan noted that concern was also expressed at the last Biannual Virginia Bluebird Society Conference about recruiting younger people. She reported that putting webcams into schools has been a success. She suggested putting a webcam in one of the bluebird houses at Laurel

Elementary. A teacher would have to commit to having a box and monitor it when school is out of session and the school would have to permit a hole being drilled in the wall.

Cheryl commented that once she has input from what Deane knows, she will have the club follow up from there.

- **CVWO:** Nancy Barnhart, our liaison to CVWO, reported that CVWO had a very successful first time event in which CVWO hosted a weekend of field trips and presentations that 4 couples paid to attend. It is hoped that there will be other events of this new program. The possibility of a falcon festival will be discussed at the next board meeting.
- **Spring Bird Count:** Jim Corliss, chairperson of bird counts, reviewed dates to avoid that would conflict with other birding and social events and concluded that Sunday, May 6th, was the best choice for the 2018 Spring Bird Count. The Board agreed.
- **VSO Annual Meeting:** Bill reported that VSO used to have a standing committee that organized who would host VSO annual meetings on a 10 year rotation. That was dictated by Mountain Lake which Bill Akers and Jerry Via ran and always guaranteed a big turnout. That committee has been defunct for several years. Rexanne Bruno who is on the VSO Board and who has just moved to Williamsburg has agreed to be the annual meetings chairperson during her tenure on the board. Bill reported that there have been discussions that the Williamsburg area was long overdue to host an annual meeting. Williamsburg has hosted 3 annual meetings in the past with the last being a joint meeting with the Wilson Ornithological Society at Fort Magruder Hotel in 1995. 2018 is going to be in the Harrisonburg area but all other future years are unclaimed. Bill said we needed to decide if we are willing to host a meeting and if so that it will require an immense amount of work that will need to be started as soon as possible. Bill has explored the possibility of the Hampton Roads Bird Club collaborating with us. There may be more available venues in the Hampton – Newport News area. Logistically, the biggest issue is finding and negotiating a deal with a place that would have meeting rooms, break out rooms, a place for organizing field trips and making vans available. Arrangements would need to be made regarding who provides the meals. A speaker would need to be booked well in advance, field trips planned and the registration fee would need to be determined. The annual meetings are usually heavily attended and most are money-making enterprises as was the last one held here which Bill recalled yielded a profit of several thousand dollars (although that is not the primary goal). It would require a committee separate from the Board. Bill stated that it requires an average of 15 -16 months to organize an annual meeting. The group initially agreed that the earliest possible date that we could consider hosting one would be 2020. 2020 is also the last year of the Breeding Bird Atlas so we might consider choosing a date to take advantage of breeding bird activities. Bill noted that it would be laudable to tie the meeting in with the BBA but said it would take some selling to get folks willing to devote a field trip to go out to a rural part of South Hampton County versus more exciting birding spots like Craney Island. Bill reported that he has suggested to the VSO Board that there be at least a minimum of a 3-5 year rotation so that we know where the annual meetings are going to be in three to five years if not ten. There has also been some discussion at the VSO Board regarding the possibility that in the future when a place for the annual meetings is chosen, that the VSO then organizes it as it is

doing for the one in 2018 in Harrisonburg. But it is easier for a local club to organize it. Nancy raised the point that if we don't step up who is going to do the one in 2019. Cheryl said she will speak with Shawn Dash, president of the Hampton Roads Bird Club concerning the above issues and report back.

- **Bird Club Walks at New Quarter Park versus James City Parks:** We revisited this issue which had been discussed at the last board meeting without any resolve. Jim Corliss made a proposal that we schedule a walk at New Quarter Park at 8 am on the fourth Saturday of each month. He also recommended scheduling an 8 am walk at one of 6 James City Parks (ex. Greensprings Interpretive Trail, Freedom Park, York River State Park, Jamestown Island, Chickahominy Riverfront Park) that we would rotate through for the second Saturday of each month. The proposal was met with great enthusiasm. Jan and Jim will talk with superintendent, Bonnie Fitz, and Michael Wilcox about the NQP schedule. John Carnifax, director of James City Parks and Recreation will also need to be contacted. Jim said he will send out an email with a proposed list of recommendations for folks to comment on.
- **Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas 2:** Bill reported that he learned from a recent steering committee meeting that the initial year momentum has waned as participation has dropped off. The coordinator, Ashley Peele, had presented maps of what had been done in 2016 and 2017 that showed how far behind we are. It is clear that more birders are needed to participate for the next 3 years. Dave Youker is the coordinator of our region 11. Bill reported that Dave said that of the 315 blocks that about 50% of them have had some birding done. It had been hoped that 126 blocks would have been completed by 2017 but only 6 have been completed to date. The minimum that needs to be completed are 55 priority blocks. That means that 17 to 18 priority blocks would need to be done in each of the next 3 years! Dave Youker is trying to rally the Hampton Roads Bird Club. Bill would like to come up with a plan that our club would work towards at the very minimum an 'x' number of priority blocks in 2018, 19 and 20. One of the challenges is that Region 11 goes all the way down to the North Carolina border so it will entail quite a bit of traveling. Some nocturnal work would also be required. It was agreed that to do so would require more organization by setting dates and destinations. Shirley suggested that Dave do a program for our club in February or March to stir up enthusiasm and review what needs to be done and how. Bill said he's offered to do what he can here within our club. It was noted that it is difficult to commit to an area that is long distance and requires at least 20 hours or at least 4 visits. Nancy said that Dave had even pointed out that now is the time to get familiar with outlying areas and making a plans. Cheryl suggested buddying up with less skilled birders and setting a time and date to get them involved would help. Bill will pitch this as strong as he can to the Master Naturalists suggesting they can earn hours by participating. Cheryl suggested enlisting the W&M Bird Club.
**** 2:16 pm The meeting came to a screeching halt when Shirley spotted Bill's Western Tanager on his feeder and stayed long enough for all to admire.
- **WBC Web Site:** Bill announced that he'd like to see a 'where to bird' tab on our web site that points people to our local birding hot spots and that reports how to get there, parking availability, entrance fees if applicable and what can potentially be seen at different seasons. He

said he's willing to work on it and welcomes help. He plans to also pitch the idea to the Master Naturalists. Shirley noted that many of our birding sites are on the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail and could be used as a link. It was noted that even if only 10 people volunteered for one site each that that would be adequate to get the job done using a standard format and to keep the info up to date on the web site.

- **Local Bird List:** Bill reported that the local bird list has changed dramatically. There is one that we maintain on our club web site. He sends a report to Jeanette every year of changes in dates and species. He's added four species of birds to our local cumulative list this year. They are as follows: an Allen's Hummingbird, Roseate Spoonbill, Lincoln's Sparrow and a female Brown Booby on the deck of the Jamestown Ferry. In 2012 the list totaled 346 species. Currently the total is 358!
- **Revision of the Annotated Checklist:** Bill reported that a revision is long overdue to reflect changes in taxonomy and family names, new data about early and late dates, peak counts and new species. Bill said he would be willing to work on that and proposed that he would like to put it exclusively on-line. It would require using the original format, reorganizing the birds and updating the text. The Board would have to decide whether they would want to print copies. Shirley had done some investigation about printing copies of the previous one. Bill said we should also update our photographs as there are so many wonderful ones that our members have recently taken. Shirley reported that it could be a money maker for the club. It costs about \$9-10 for 100 copies. The last time we ordered 250 copies. We could sell some when we host the VSO annual meeting! This was met by approval of the Board.
- **Requests via the WBC Web Site:** Bill has not responded to either of the following requests but wanted the Board to be aware of them. One was from Matt Leonard of Minuteman Press who was seeking our business. It was agreed that we are more than satisfied by the work of Bob Schammerhorn. At this point, Shirley reported that we have only a very few WBC rack cards left and will need to reorder soon.

Michael Wilcox asked that we help rejuvenate a ¼ mile trail in Charles Brown Park in Lackey. He said that they have maintenance people and are seeking advice on how to do it and what needs to be done with the landscape. Bill would like to see our club affiliated with this project in some way. The request is also being presented to the Master Naturalist Board. Cheryl said she would talk to Michael and see how our club could be of assistance in providing info about what plants are of use to birds. Shirley suggested that we could do a bird walk there.

**** 2:38 Another brief pause in the meeting to admire a return visit of the Western Tanager.

- **Annual Boat Trip:** Geoff Giles reported that the annual boat trip on the Bay Princess to tour the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands is all set. This is the fifth year Geoff has organized this field trip. Bill noted that Geoff deserves a lot of credit for starting this event that folks look forward to annually. Cheryl asked when we should post it on our web site and FB page where it is visible to clubs throughout Virginia. Geoff said he likes to advertise it first to our members, the Master Naturalists and then the Hampton Road Club before the rest of Virginia. It was decided to wait until after Christmas to post the trip. Cheryl will inform Jeanette.

- **Birding Etiquette:** Nancy expressed concern that the field trip leader for Hogg Island had difficulty maintaining any control over the group with some folks repeatedly surging ahead. Shirley thought we should run a review of birding etiquette once a year in our newsletter. Bill recommended that field trip leaders politely remind folks that birding is a shared experience and that adhering to the rules enhances the experience for everyone.

Bill adjourned the meeting at 2:50 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Millar, Secretary,
Williamsburg Bird Club
January 2, 2018