

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board

Williamsburg Bird Club

February 12, 2018

Freedom Park Interpretive Center, 5537 Centerville Rd. Williamsburg, VA

Board Member Attendees: Cheryl Jacobson, Judy Jones, Melinda Cousins, Ann Carpenter, Cathy Millar, Gary Carpenter, Shirley Devan

Board Members Absent: Bill Williams

Chair Attendees: Jeanette Navia, Geoff Giles, Jim Corliss, Lee Schuster, Barbara Neiss,

Chair Attendees Absent: Nancy Pledger, Bill Williams, Tom McCary, Nancy Barnhart

The meeting was called to order by President Cheryl Jacobson at 9:30 am. She began by welcoming and thanking those present for their work for the bird club. Introductions were made for the benefit of new members.

Secretary's Report – Cathy Millar: Gary Carpenter noted that he had been absent for the previous meeting and that the minutes had shown concern for the possible need of a committee to be established for the program of supplying seed to CDR for which Gary is responsible. Gary thought it not really an issue as he normally does not require assistance. The lines in question were struck from the minutes. There was no further discussion and the amended minutes were approved by the Board.

Treasurer's Report – Ann Carpenter: Ann distributed a copy of the final figures for 2017 which also included an annual summary for the years 2011 thru to 2017. She stated that because our club solicits donations, she has to send a different treasurer's report every year to the Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services. This report is different in that it must be based on income and expenses that actually occurred in the fiscal (calendar) year. For example, it does not include 2017 dues received in December of 2016. Unlike the report presented to the Board, this report is not meant to be a comparison of dues, etc. from one year to another.

She reported that the balance in our accounts in 2017 was \$17,944.15 which is down from \$21,013.07 in 2016. Under expenses, she noted that donations to grants were down from the previous year. Although the Board had not yet decided how many Ornithology research grants were to be awarded in 2018 to W&M students, she'd recently received an email from Renee Peace, office manager of Integrated Science Center, which listed 3 students and their corresponding research that were recommended for grants. The list of students and research projects was passed around. Cheryl noted that our budget is sufficient to cover 3 grants without any issue. A motion was made to fund 3 grants of \$599 each which was seconded and passed unanimously.

Ann clarified that she'd put the expense of the rack cards under the '*Stamps/Admin/&Memb. Exp.*' column.

A motion was made that the financial report for 2017 be accepted and was seconded and approved unanimously by the Board. A spreadsheet of the club's assets, income and expenses for all of 2017 was added to the records.

Ann reviewed the club's assets, income and expenses to date in 2108 and the spreadsheet was added to the records. It was noted that we made a profit of \$440 on the Chesapeake Bay Boat Trip. She recommended reminding the membership to renew dues at the upcoming meeting.

There was discussion about continuing to donate \$200 each to the Williamsburg Regional Library, Center for Conservation Biology, Historic Virginia Land Conservancy and Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory. It was noted that we have sufficient funds so a motion was made to donate \$200 to each of those organizations. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

New and Old Business:

- **Endowment for Nature Camp Scholarships:** Cheryl reported that there had been a communication on the club's website from 2 people who are family members of a couple that are members of the club. Stressing anonymity, they would like to set up an endowment of a sufficient amount that the interest would pay every year for one Nature Camp Scholarship in the name of the couple. They don't want the couple to know of the source. This is the club's first experience with an endowment and Ann will discuss with Sun Trust, where our checking account is, about setting up an investment portfolio for these funds. The only concern that the donors expressed was what would happen to the money if the club closes. Ann will ask Sun Trust. Shirley asked that we check with the donors about what happens if the cost of the scholarship should exceed the income. This endowment will be independent of the camp scholarships that the club awards. A motion was made that we pursue this endowment. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.
- **Newsletter Issues/Costs:** Melinda Cousins was complimented on her first production of *The Flyer*. She has set a goal of publishing *The Flyer* within the first week of the month. She reported that printing 65 and mailing 55 of the 10 annual issues of *The Flyer* costs about \$700 a year. She checked with local businesses and couldn't find one that could reduce this cost. She enquired about checking with the folks on the mailing list about realizing that they are getting a redacted version of *The Flyer* and to consider switching to the digital version. Jeanette reported that due to a decision previously made all members who have an email are automatically sent a digital version. Shirley voiced that there are members who don't have email and computers and rely on the printed version. Judy was very concerned that the paper version creates a great deal of added work for the newsletter editor as it takes a lot of time to create a separate edition for printing. Melinda said she had to reduce the most recent newsletter from 12 to 8 pages cutting out photos and material to fit mailing size using one stamp. Judy proposed that if we continue mailing hard copies, we should do only one version of the newsletter and limit it to 12 pages. Melinda expressed concern about setting a limit on the number of pages just as more members are enjoying submitting photos. Including them in a digital newsletter where the number of pages is not an issue is no problem. But limiting the number of pages so that the newsletter can also be printed (with photos in B&W) will prevent adding many of these photos which makes the publication more appealing. Cheryl commented that every year we ask members to opt for the digital version on the renewal form. Jeanette reported that at least 4 people have switched. Shirley emphasized that considering our fine budget, money should not be an issue. Cheryl asked that Melinda find out at what point the cost of mailing the whole newsletter will go up

regarding the number of pages and report back to us at the next meeting whereupon we will decide if it is economically feasible to send out the entire newsletter regardless of the number of pages. Melinda will also discuss the issue with Fred Blystone who is currently purchasing the stamps and mailing the hard copies. In the meantime she suggested that Melinda send out just the one version of *The Flyer*. Cheryl said she would write a blurb for the newsletter suggesting that members still receiving hard copies consider switching to digital to reduce paper usage to protect the environment and that doing so would also free more funds for scholarships. Since there was no consensus at the moment, this topic will be revisited at the next board meeting.

- **Breeding Bird Atlas:** Cheryl introduced the issue describing that on year one after some BBA training by Dave Youker, coordinator for of our Region 11, there had been quite a bit of enthusiasm with folks signing up for priority blocks. That enthusiasm dropped significantly on year two and there is currently minimal involvement. There are 44 priority areas that have had no work done. Dave has asked that our club be responsible for 22 of them and that the Hampton Roads Bird Club do the other 22 in the next 3 years. That breaks down to our club finishing 7 priority blocks per year. Dave is willing to repeat training and conduct workshops in our area. Cheryl asked how we felt about the assignment of 22 areas many of which are quite far away and how we can regenerate enthusiasm. Cheryl has signed up for 2 blocks leaving 5 for this year. Shirley noted that most of our club is composed of back yard birders and estimates that the majority would not be inspired to participate. She suggested that we may need a designated champion in our club who arranges trips to a block. Cathy enquired about reaching out to Master Naturalists for help. It was noted that it is already on their list of activities approved by the club and that many of those already involved in atlasing have dual membership. Following an enquiry about organizing field trips focused on atlasing, it was noted that last year the Region 5 coordinator led 5 field trips (one trip each) to 5 priority blocks that identified birds that were apt to be breeders and that that had motivated folks to volunteer to return and confirm breeding behavior. Cheryl had already sent out a list to our board of the 22 blocks assigned to our club and will email it again. It was decided that Cheryl will promote the BBA at our upcoming joint meeting with the local chapter of the VA Master Naturalists as a great service project. She will put a notice in our newsletter that Ashley Peele is making a BBA presentation at the Hampton Roads Bird Club on April 12 and conducting a BBA workshop on April 14. Our club is invited to both. She asked if we were interested in Dave Youker doing a training session for those interested in participating in our club. It would also be a way of assessing how many folks are available. If Dave is not available there are certainly others like Bill Williams who are very capable. A Sunday afternoon was thought to be an optimal time. Cheryl will check on Dave's availability.
- **Virginia Society of Ornithology Annual Meeting:** Cheryl introduced the subject noting that every year the VSO holds a three day annual meeting featuring keynote speakers, field trips and other activities in different areas of the state. She also noted that we have three local people on the VSO board as excellent resources. The last time our club has hosted an annual meeting was in 1995 and we are being urged to consider doing so again in the near future. It has been suggested that we cohost the meeting with Hampton Roads Bird Club. The president of HRBC, Shawn Dash, has told Cheryl that for personal reasons his club would be unable to commit in

2019 but that 2020 was a possibility. The VSO has an instruction manual that gives details about how to organize an annual meeting. The first task would be securing a keynote speaker and location as soon as possible. Shirley reported that Rexanne Bruno, who has recently become a member of our club, is in charge of this year's meeting being held in Harrisonburg and might be agreeable to taking the lead in helping our club do so in 2020. Cheryl will be meeting with Rexanne soon and will see how she feels about chairing the committee. Shirley said that the key thing is establishing a planning committee of folks with different talents that might include some members of the board but is separate from the board. She said that the VSO is supportive in terms of advertising the meeting and can advance funds for hotel down payments, etc. The meeting can even be a money maker for our club. A good deal of concern was voiced by several about the difficulty of dividing the work and maintaining an environment of equal decision making between the two clubs if we cohost the meeting with Hampton Roads Bird Club. There was also concern about the distance between the two clubs increasing the amount of travel for planning committee members and making more of an issue of where the meeting would be held. Further discussion established 2020 as the preferred target date. Shirley added that the meeting is typically held in late April or May and that 2020 will be the 5th year of the breeding bird atlas. She noted that the month of May is a busy time in Williamsburg and would need to factor W&M's graduation, Kingsmill Golf Tournament and Mother's Day when selecting a date. After a lot of further discussion a motion was made that the Williamsburg Bird Club host the annual VSO meeting on its own in 2020. The motion was seconded. There were 5 yeas and 2 nays from board members. None abstaining. The motion was passed. One of the 'nay' votes was based on the concern that there aren't enough people in our bird club that would commit to a time intensive project and that much of it would fall upon the members of the board. She also was concerned about finding a leader if Rexanne is unavailable. Shirley said she'd volunteer to do so if that happens as she will be involved anyway. Gary enquired if we, the board, should make the decision for the entire club or bring it up to the general membership for a vote. The By-Laws give the board who are elected by the membership the authority to make decisions for the membership. Cheryl will let Hampton Roads Bird Club know that we are sponsoring the annual meeting on our own and will also email us when she gets Rexanne's reply.

- **Patron Level:** Cheryl reported that she'd had a person ask if they get something like a decal, etc. for subscribing to the patron level of \$35 in our club and if not why do we have that level. Jeanette said we haven't increased our membership dues in years. Melinda suggested we could list patrons in our newsletter if they wanted recognition. Ann pointed out that someone could join as a single for \$15 and give \$50 for Nature Camp therefore committing even more money than a patron. A consensus was reached that we let things stand as they are and that future folks asking about the benefit of patron membership be told that it makes more funds available for scholarships and other club programs.
- **Destination Expo:** Cheryl had sent out an email requesting volunteers to man our table for Destination Expo. There were no replies and it was determined that Cheryl and Jeanette would be able to manage without further help.

- **Bird Counts/Bird Walks:** Jim Corliss, chairperson of bird counts and walks, reported that the data from the Christmas Bird Count has been submitted and approved by the reviewer. The Spring Bird Count is coming up on May 6th. Assuming we are able to continue to get free rooms for the tabulation, the annual budget of \$400 for refreshments for both the Christmas and Spring Bird Counts has been more than adequate.
Jim reported that 27 people attended the WBC bird walk to College Creek beach which was the first in our new schedule of including other sites as well as New Quarter Park each month. A March walk led by Nancy Barnhart will be at Ware Creek NWM. Carpooling is being considered as it is further away. Jim is still looking for more leaders.
- **Field Trips:** Geoff Giles, chairperson of field trips, reported on the following:
February 17: Dutch Gap led by Geoff. Expecting a lot of good duck sightings.
March (date to be determined): Curles Neck led by Ellison Orcutt. If we don't get permission to visit this private property, the backup plan is Newport News Park on the third week of March.
March 31st: Geoff will be leading a bird walk at New Kent Forestry Center at the 'Walk in the Forest' event.
- **Walkie Talkies:** Cathy Millar showed the group the 10 Retevis RT22 Walkie Talkies that the board had approved her purchasing for \$132.99. They were assembled and charged and in working order. As the Field Trip chairperson, Geoff will be keeping them and providing them for field trips that entail a lot of birding via a caravan of cars.
- **Programs:** Judy Jones, programs chairperson, reported on the following:
February Joint meeting with the local chapter of the Master Naturalist Club with presentation by Busch Gardens about the Migratory Bird Act and program birds.
March Speaker is Dan Cristol. Topic to be determined.
April W&M graduate students will share the research that has been partly funded by our club's grants.
May still trying to reschedule Matt Anthony
September Dave Youker will be speaking about the Breeding Bird Atlas after the Nature Camp Scholarship awardees give a brief presentation.
October Author Katie Fallon will talk about her two books, CERULEAN BLUES (2011) and VULTURES, The Private Life of an Unloved Bird (2017)
November still open
December no meeting
- **Miscellaneous:**
New Quarter Park Survey: NQP requested that we send an email to our membership containing a survey regarding what sort of items they would be interested in buying at the NQP office. The consensus was that we not be involved. Cheryl will inform them that we support and love NQP but do not send such emails to our membership.
Brown Booby: Cathy Millar showed the group the flier with photos of the Brown Booby seen on the Jamestown Ferry late last spring that she printed after she was asked to try to gather more info at the last board meeting. She had it posted at the ferry office requesting more info from crew but hasn't heard a word.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act Cathy expressed outrage that in this Year of the Bird and the 100th Anniversary of Migratory Bird Treaty Act that there is a serious threat that much of the act will be gutted by the Dept. of Interior which is considering a reinterpretation of the act that would include a loophole that no longer held industry responsible for the accidental killing of nongame birds and thus remove incentive for finding solutions to preventing bird death incurred by business operations. She noted that the club has generally steered away from political action but proposed that this should be an exception as birds are the focus for our club's being! Shirley suggested that Cheryl put a blurb in our newsletter describing the problem and include contact info along with a sample email that concerned members could use if they want to express an opinion. Cheryl readily agreed to do so.

Next Meeting: Monday, May 14th at 9:30am if a room is available.

Cheryl adjourned the meeting at 11:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Millar, Secretary,
Williamsburg Bird Club
February 19, 2018