

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board

Williamsburg Bird Club

November 20, 2020

Conducted via Zoom, Invited by Dean Shostak; Presided by Cheryl Jacobson

Board Member Attendees: Cheryl Jacobson, Dean Shostak, Tory Gussman, Mary Ellen Hodges, Ann and Gary Carpenter, Cathy Millar, Shirley Devan

Board Members Absent: Bill Williams

Chair Attendees: Jeanette Navia, George Martin, Lee Schuster, Catherine Flanagan

Chair Attendees Absent: Jim Corliss, Patty Maloney, Nancy Barnhart

The meeting was called to order by Cheryl Jacobson at 2pm. A quorum of the Executive Board was present. The order of the meeting was altered to accommodate attendees who needed to leave early.

Field Trips – George Martin: George enquired whether the board supported resuming field trips in view of how the two Scott Hemler led bird walks conducted using Covid precautions had worked. Gary Carpenter suggested that due to the coronavirus surge and the CDC's recommendation that folks not make nonessential outings that the club postpone further field trips until vaccines are available. Cheryl commented that there hasn't even been a great deal of interest in attending bird walks. It was noted that the Christmas Bird Count can be done safely if sectors are split up and assigned to participants who will conduct the count individually and not in groups. Cheryl requested that because this is a significant issue that a motion be made. Gary made two motions: (1) that field trips and bird walks be postponed until a vaccine is widely available; (2) that the Christmas Count will be done by individuals only. Shirley seconded the motions. Both motions were passed unanimously. Cheryl will inform Jim Corliss and Scott Hemler of this motion and notify members who'd signed up for the November NQP bird walk.

Membership/Webmaster – Jeanette Navia: Jeanette reported that despite the fact that we are not having in-person meetings or field trips and only limited bird walks, we have had five new memberships since we nearly shut down in March. We have 187 active memberships, 167 of which are paid (others include Lifetime memberships, Comp memberships, and W&M student memberships). 48 memberships are family memberships, so counting them as two, we have about 215 members.

Jeanette related how pleased she is with the new process of sending Cheryl the names of new members so that Cheryl can send them a welcoming letter with a link to our website and its useful information. It has relieved her of one membership duty and is more environmentally friendly than sending printed membership packets. Ann suggested that the welcome letter be sent to all our membership to remind them of the useful resources on our website. Shirley refined the idea by recommending that instead of sending the welcome letter, that instead Cheryl send a listserv email to inform the membership of our new policy regarding field trips and bird walks and include links to the documents mentioned in the welcome letter (birding hot spots, birds of the area) and to the VSO website. Ann added that it also would be useful to remind the membership that the new year starts in January and it's time to start paying dues for 2021. Cheryl agreed to do so.

Ann told Jeanette that she can send her the membership checks as she can now deposit them online with SunTrust Bank.

Jeanette reported that she hasn't changed much on the website, except she is now duplicating the information about the meetings, putting one copy on the calendar and one on the front page so people see it more readily.

She reported that Barry Trott, bird club member and librarian (fellow coworker), had contacted her about adding a "carousel" of books that the library offers on birds. She has put this on the page that lists the books/DVDs/CDs that the library's gift money has paid for.

See <https://williamsburgbirdclub.org/about/40-years-of-donations-to-the-williamsburg-regional-library/> Click on a cover of one of the items in the carousel and you are taken to the library's catalog entry for that item. This was a new project for the library, asking groups with whom they have a partnership to add such carousels to their websites.

Lee Schuster (Library Liaison) announced that she'd received from the Williamsburg Regional Library the list of books that they recommend we buy for them. Lee always reviews them but also likes to add recent books/eBooks and asked that we email her any suggestions.

Secretary's Report – Cathy Millar: Cathy had shared the August 28th board meeting minutes via email after that meeting and a second time with an addendum just before this meeting. Gary Carpenter moved that they be approved; Ann seconded the motion; accepted unanimously.

Treasurer's Report – Ann Carpenter: Ann reported the following as of 11/16/2020:

Assets: Checking Account: \$ 4,906.08; Money Market: \$ 7,794.34; CD #1 – cashed out in February; CD#2: \$2,847.53; CD #3; \$2,604.

Total checking and savings: \$18,151.95. We began 2020 with assets of \$16,722.16 as of December 31, 2019.

Projected Outstanding Expenses:

November Speaker Honoraria: \$75

December Flyer - \$38

PO Box - \$80 (corrected as now \$92)

Purple Mountain Houses in Gloucester – \$942

Total Outstanding Expenses: \$1,135

Ann's pdf files (3 pages, 2 files) for Interim Report on Income and Expenses for 2020 and 2019 with comparisons were added to the minutes.

She noted that we have over \$12,000 in liquid assets and another \$6,000 in CD's.

She reviewed the listed outstanding expenses. Ann reported that our November program speaker, Sarah Karpanty, had donated her honorarium to the Ruth Beck Ornithology Research Grant.

Cathy Millar moved that Ann's report be accepted; seconded by Gary Carpenter; approved unanimously.

Purple Martin Project: Cheryl reported that the club now has purple martin setups at three sites: New Quarter Park, York River State Park and Chickahominy Waterfront Park. She noted with gratitude that Dean Shostak, representing Backyard Birders Seed & Supply, has donated six gourds. Ann will send them a letter of acknowledgment.

Cheryl and Shan Gill have met the home owner in Gloucester that has offered us a gently used setup at half price to determine the quality and moveability of the Purple Martin pole and gourds. There has been an established Purple Martin colony using the gourds since 2016 and this past summer 76 Martins were successfully fledged using 20 gourds on this 24- gourd system.

All components are in very good and operable condition. Referencing the Troyer's 2020 catalog, new prices are as follows:

-Super System 24 Gourd Rack Combo, 16' heavy duty 3" square aluminum pole, ground stake (would have to dig up if wanted and it's set in concrete) 34' of stainless cable, perch rod, Worm Gear brake winch (an upgrade) \$660

- 24 Super Gourds, Crescent shaped starling-resistant entrances, porches, owl-guards, 24 mounting arms \$479
- Extra Worm Gear Brake Winch \$85
- EZ Off Predator Guard, modified with snake sniffer holes and mounting bracket \$87
- 4 Purple Martin decoys \$24
- Starling trap, mounted on 8' pressure-treated 4"x4" pole \$89
- Sparrow "No-Escape" ground trap \$140
- And new purchases made in spring 2020....
- 12 Troyer's Vertical Gourds with Conley II entrances w/ wing entrapment guard \$228
- 12 Troyer's Vented Caps \$48
- mounting arms for Troyer's Vertical Gourds (12) \$44.00

Troyer's catalog price for all is \$1,884.
Half price is \$942

Cheryl had shared this info via email with the board and had received unanimous approval for acquiring it. Our balance in the Geoff Giles fund is \$1,487.35. Honoring Geoff's family's request that his memorial fund cover one Nature Camp scholarship of \$942, leaves \$545.35 for purchasing the martin equipment. \$414.65 would need to come from the general bird club fund. Ann Carpenter moved that we support the PM setup using a combination of money from Geoff Giles Memorial fund and the balance from our general fund. The move was seconded by Cathy Millar and approved unanimously.

Cheryl reported that it will take some coordinated effort to move the setup as it is set in concrete. She hopes to have it installed in the new site before the ground is frozen. She and Shan had looked at locations on VIMS and determined only one appropriate site but that it is currently staked out for some other project. There is an excellent space at Gloucester Beach Park. It took many phone calls to reach a staff person with Gloucester City Parks. That person suggested we also check out Machicomoco State Park and Woodville City Park. In exploring those, it was determined that the State Park is too remote and Woodville is too wooded. A request has been made for permission to install at Gloucester Beach Park and Cheryl is awaiting a response. The new site is close enough to the old one that returning martins are very likely to find it.

Election of Executive Board Officers and Committee Chairpersons: Cheryl had emailed everyone to see if they were willing to remain on the board and was pleased to report that everyone is willing to serve in 2021. At our November Zoom membership meeting, Cheryl had invited the members to send her any nominations via email and has received none to date. Tory made the motion that the slate of current officers for 2021 be approved. Gary seconded it and there was unanimous approval. Cheryl will send an email to inform the membership so they will be prepared to vote at our January meeting. This will be the first time the membership will vote via Zoom. It was decided that Cheryl will request that if anyone objects that they should raise their hand or comment in the chat box.

Christmas Bird Count: Jim Corliss was absent. Cheryl will notify him of our motion to limit participants to counting individually and not in groups. She remarked that Audubon has made it clear that they would completely understand if we should ever decide to cancel our participation this year.

Programs – Tory Gussman, Co-Vice President: Tory reported that our January 20, 2021 program speaker will be Bob Schamerhorn presenting *Web-footed Waterbirds*. He will focus on the waterbirds that inhabit our lakes and rivers with photos, sounds and identification tips.

Cheryl reported that our February 17th meeting will feature Dr. Bryan Watts giving us an update on Center for Conservation programs. This will be a joint meeting with Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia

Master Naturalists. She expressed concern as to whether there might be an issue if there are more than 100 attendees. Dean thought it doubtful. To avoid there being too many for Zoom to support, we will not invite other bird clubs but a video of Dr Watts's presentation will be available for them afterwards.

Cheryl brought up a concern for discussion regarding an email Cathy Millar had sent the board prior this meeting. Cathy has been summarizing programs to be included in *The Flyer* esp. for the benefit of those who hadn't attended the meeting. She now wonders if her summaries are redundant since the programs are now being recorded and made available to the membership. She was concerned that her articles may be taking up space in the newsletter needed for other posts. Cheryl noted that Dean is setting up a WBC YouTube site starting in January that will store the programs permanently and be accessible to the public. Shirley suggested having a place on our website to store Cathy's summaries. Mary Ellen reported that to date, there has been no conflict for space in the newsletter and suggested that the summaries are quicker to read than watching a video. The summaries are also useful for members who aren't online. Cheryl proposed that this issue can be revisited if space becomes an issue. But recommended for now that Cathy continue writing the summaries. That was agreeable to all concerned.

Tory reported that the March speaker will be a notable birder from the Eastern Shore that was recommended as a result to his presentation to an Audubon group. More information to come.

The Flyer - Mary Ellen Hodges: Mary Ellen reported that there will not be a December newsletter. The deadline for submissions for the January newsletter is December 28th.

Child Development Resources – Gary Carpenter: Gary reported that CDR remains closed.

New Business:

- **Geoff Giles Spotting Scope:** Cheryl reported that Geoff's wife has donated his excellent quality scope to our club. There were four options discussed regarding what to do with it: (1) to sell it and put the money in Geoff's Memorial Fund; (2) to lend it to club members (3) to use it for bird walks and field trips, or (4) to donate it to a research or educational organization in Central or South America (like Community Cloud Forest Conservation). The board agreed that the best use would be to lend it to group leaders. Cheryl will check with Scott Hemler, Jim Corliss and George Martin.
- **Club's Continued Support of the South Island Seabird Colony:** Cheryl introduced a discussion of what our club can do. Shirley proposed sending a thank you note to Governor Northam, VDWR, Becky Gwynn and others on the state level that were so instrumental in saving Virginia's largest seabird colony. She, with Lee's input, will draft a letter of gratitude and promised continued support as the program progresses. Cheryl suggested including that letter in the January newsletter. Great pleasure was expressed by how Sarah Karpanty acknowledged the importance of Ruth Beck's decades of conservation work. Cheryl proposed that someone write a tribute to Ruth Beck for our newsletter. Ruth died in 2015 and many of our members have no knowledge of her important work at Grandview Nature Preserve, Craney Island and South Island. Shirley volunteered to write a draft with input from those who worked with Ruth. She hopes to have it ready for the December 28th deadline.
Tory enquired how will we remain aware of progress/needs over the next few months/years of continued work to save the seabird colony. Shirley noted that the VSO has been a prime mover and doer and will continue to remain involved. A number of our club members attend the VSO meetings so staying informed should not be an issue.

- **Next Meeting:** Friday, February 26th 2021 via Zoom at 2 pm. Gary commented that we should consider continuing our board meetings via Zoom even post Covid since it has proven so convenient for all.

Cheryl Jacobson adjourned the meeting at 3:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Millar, Secretary,
Williamsburg Bird Club,
November 24, 2020

Addendum: December 31, 2020: A letter from the WBC was composed by Shirley Devan and added to by Mary Ellen Hodges to thank those parties who were involved in providing alternative safe nesting sites for returning seabirds who'd been nesting on South Island. Ann Carpenter printed and mailed them.