Minutes of the 44th Annual Conference Meeting, Albuquerque, NM
Thursday, August 22, 2019
11am-4pm

Minutes prepared by Liga L. Auzins-Wurster, Rec. Sec’y.


Guests: Bob Day, member from Alaska; Virginia (Ginger) P. Johnson, Graphics Manager, Western Birds (WB); Edward Pandolfo, Publications Committee; Diane E. Rose, Registrar; Steven R. Rose, Registration Assistant; W. David Shuford, past President. Phil Unitt, Editor, WB.

11:12am Meeting called to order, welcome and roll.

Minutes from May 1st, 2019 accepted unanimously via motion to approve by Steve and seconded by Ken.

11:18am FINANCE:

Treasurer’s Report: (Suzanne): Our cash is $403,000 with $129,000 in the Publications fund and $41,000 in the Scholarship fund. Our CDs matured in June and the proceeds were transferred to existing accounts Bank of America and Capitol One. The Finance Committee has agreed to invest $180,000 in new CDs, which will leave more than enough cash readily available for operations. Net income YTD is $71,000 primarily due to conference registration and trip revenue but will be reduced by future expenditures, i.e., WB, Conference, and Scholarships. Book sales are unfavorable to budget, The Biology of a Desert Apparition: LeConte’s Thrasher (Thrasher) by $1,700 and Trends and Traditions Avifaunal Change in Western North America (Trends) by $2,700.

The Publications Fund is based on 39% from fund raising, 37% from trips and 24% from page charges. $17,000 has been used toward book publications. The Scholarship fund consists of 34% from a one-time matching fund, 24% from Audubon chapters, 18% from trips plus 24% from small donations. $22,000 has been used for scholarships. Kimball and Jon’s one-time fund-raising letter garnered $40,000 (out of the total $55,000 raised).

Page charges that come from WB go to the Publications Fund.

The last page of our Treasurer’s report is the Scholarship pie-chart of 4 components. 34% came from the one-time matching fund. 24% came from Audubon chapters over the years. Trips is 18% where leaders opt to donate to the Scholarship Program. 24% is from other donations, i.e., silent auction etc. and individual donations. People will contribute if asked. We received approximately $3,000 from circulating donation envelopes at the Ventura Banquet which is considered part of the
34% matching fund. The silent auction donations are split between the Scholarship and Publications Funds. Pasadena Audubon contributed $5,000 in 2010, $5,000 in 2014, and $2,000 in 2016. The Scholarship fund has had $60,000 in income since 2010.

We have sold 1 e-book (LeConte’s to J. Sheppard – the author). The Gambell book print sales projections are unfavorable to budget. So far in 2019 we sold 7 c. of LeConte’s and 11 c of Trends. Inventory is 199 copies and 56 copies respectively. Originally the print run was 300 and 200 again respectively.

Trips: The Northwest Ca. trip was favorable to budget by $9,800. The 2020 Tasmania trip revenues will be included in the 2020 budget.

**Note:** When purchasing from Amazon, anyone who wishes to contribute to WFO can do so by purchasing from smile.amazon.com website versus Amazon alone. We are also able to get contributions from e-bay if so designated.

**ACTION ITEM:** We will put this in the next newsletter and e-mail to the membership.

Homer: We have had 46 scholarships since 2008. It is 30% retention rate for those people to stay as members. This does not include the 2019 recipients.

**ACTION ITEM:** (It is something the Student Programs Committee should do) Sierra Foothill Audubon does their donations annually in November so we need to apprise them of what we have been doing with their donation and hopefully they will give us another donation.

The 2020 budget process will start in November with input from everyone, with a concise draft by the end of December and for Board approval in January 2020.

**ACTION ITEM:** Suzanne will put out a budget calendar, so the Board can prepare their budget in a timely manner.

**Membership Report:** Current membership has dropped to below 1,000, the lowest in at least 10 years. We currently have 995 members (205 of which are Life Members, 9 Patrons and 17 foreign members). So far in 2019, 50 people decided to join WFO which partially offsets the 185 members who did not renew for a net decrease of 135 since 12/31/18.

**ACTION ITEM:** Suzanne will consider California membership trends versus non-California, if any, over the last 10 years and also send Dan an annual list of Canadian members.

**Finance Report:** (Tom)

1. I want to thank Suzanne for sending out all the reports particularly the Aplos material and all the work that goes into filings for IRS, Franchise Tax Board, etc., There is a lot of work behind that.

2. Ken sent me a note about the pricing of the books for our input. I see that as a publications issue.

3. Homer called me about a month ago and asked about a financial review for the organization. I called Suzanne and we went over things that she does and how it worked in the past. I went back to 2012 when we had a review done by Dan Singer, who came up with positive thoughts on how it was going and some recommendations. He also suggested that we have a review every 5 years.
We paid Dan $1,000. We also had Dave Quady look over his shoulder (for the final report). We have come a long way since 2012. Our cash on hand was $200,000 then. We have twice as much now. We have picked up the Aplos program for accounting since that time. We have laddered CD’s. Should we have another review now or should wait for the 10-year period to pass?

Suzanne: I am completely open and transparent. Anyone who wants to look through my files or come and sit with me is totally fine.

Kurt: We might have it on the Agenda for the retreat. Maybe talk about what kind of financial review is best, and we can move forward from there. Maybe the quorum at the retreat can decide what kind of financial review we are going to have and the timing of it.

Other business: Suzanne: I would like to look into ways to separate the membership activities from the treasurer’s activities. I think it could be done if the accounts were set up properly. I don’t mind doing it alone. It may be harder for my tenure to find one person who has the time to do both.

Publications Committee:

**WB:** Phil: We are on schedule for publication of **WB** 50(3) by the end of August. I am expecting Tim Brittain to send me the page proof for the issue. There are 9 manuscripts for a total of 88 pages. We also have two articles including the report of the Washington BRC already accepted and scheduled for **WB** 50(4). Eight articles have been in review for the past year with authors working on the final revisions. Two of those required such substantial revisions that the authors may fail to follow through, but the remaining 6 should be completed with adequate revision for publication in **WB** 50(4). Three manuscripts received since the 30th of July are still being reviewed. The good news is that our reviews are proceeding at a good pace. We have had 23 manuscripts submitted so far in 2019, a rate which if sustained, brings us to 36 for the year and that brings us back up to the line of average over the last 8 years.

**ACTION ITEM:** ALL: The number of submissions has not increased over the last several years so please encourage friends who are doing interesting ornithology to contribute to **WB**. Phil will give a 3-minute pep talk at the beginning of one of the plenary sessions.

Phil: A year or two ago, the cost increment for publishing in color became cheaper than in the past, so we do not need to scrimp on that aspect anymore. For 50(4) we have four color signatures.

Steve: Next year for the 50th anniversary Guy McCaskie was interested in writing something on CBRC. Is there someone who will be writing something on **WB**? John Garrett, who is the new editor for the Newsletter, could include something in the newsletter and then let Ed know so he can link to the website.

**ACTION ITEM:** Cat volunteered to be our book review editor. If you have ideas for books to be reviewed, please let her know.

Special Publications: (Ken)

Two books are in process. *Birds of Gambell, St. Lawrence Island*, by Paul Lehman will be going to the printer shortly and will appear sometime this Fall (Sept. or Oct.). We will have a pre-publication sale of this book at this meeting. *The Birds of Inyo County, Ca.*, has been reviewed and is now back to the authors who are working on extensive revisions. They are close to completion. It will then need to be copy edited and the laid out and probably go to the printer early next year.
We need to decide two items regarding the Gambell book: the pricing and the number of copies to print. We will not sell a lot of books, implying that we don’t want to engage in a huge print run. The Gambell book is an extremely detailed and annotated checklist of birds of Gambell, St. Lawrence Island. How many birders will buy the book to carry with them to Gambell? There is an alternative to that and that is to carry an e-book with them. The other audience for the book is the ornithological community, professional ornithologists. Paul said he would buy 30 copies himself. We need to decide on the print run. Obviously the smaller the print run the higher the cost per book because you have fixed costs, i.e., copyediting, layout, etc.

Jon: The birders who go to Gambell are intense. Paul mentioned he would contribute up to $2,000 of his own money to keep the price lower. He would also be willing to go on the road to push sales of the book.

**Jon made a motion that we print 300 copies and sell the book for $58.00. The e-book will be sold for ($29.00). Seconded by Ken. (No vote).**

Discussion:

Suzanne: At 300 copies we budgeted to price it at $50.00 plus $8.50 shipping and handling which will be at a loss to budget of $7800. If we do 150 copies, it is an additional cost of $5,000 cost because of the fixed costs. If it is 200 copies the additional cost is about $3,000, for a total loss of $11,100 to $12,800 depending on the number of copies.

Ken and Jon will set up a preorder table at this conference with a 10% discount on the price of the book. People who did not have a check can mail it into Suzanne by September 3rd to realize the discount.

**Amended Motion: Amended motion by Jon that we print 300 copies of the Gambell book at $50. with a shipping and handling charge of $8.50. The e-book will be priced at $29.00. Storage fees would come out of the Publications Fund. There is a 10% discount if the book is preordered at this conference and buyers will receive a complimentary .pdf of the book. Seconded by Ken again and passed unanimously.**

Homer made a motion that we follow the 50% reduction for the e-book for both LeConte’s and Trends but keep the other price stable for some duration (perhaps until the next meeting), seconded by Jon and passed unanimously.

Kurt establishes an ad hoc committee for promoting and advertising our publications as currently we have no way of promoting our books. This committee may be discontinued at will.

**ACTION ITEM:** Bryce will come up with ad copy, as necessary, to advertise our current books.

Suzanne: We have $2,000 in the budget for promotion of the Gambell book.

Chris: I think it’s great to have a marketing plan almost before the book is started.

**1:25pm MEETINGS:**

**Reno, NV, Meeting September 9-13, 2020:**

Ed: We are going to be in Reno next year at the Whitney Peaks. The venue is one that was used several years ago by the Great Basin Bird Observatory (GBBO). It is the only sizeable non-smoking
hotel in all of Reno. It has an enormous number of field trip options; we can do CA as well as NV. We can do the south shore and the north shore of Lake Tahoe and rent a boat. I am going to be putting together the field trips and we have a lot of help from Jon, Rosa, and Martin Meyers.

**ACTION ITEM:** ALL: Anyone who wants to get involved planning the meeting please let Ed know.

**Other item:** Ed: One thing to put in the budget next year is to buy our own projector. We rent several projectors at these meetings at $300-500 per day. We can get a very good projector for $1500. We should put that in the budget for next year.

Steve: We need 4 projectors - 3 for the workshops and 1 for the science sessions. This should get worked up by November 1st for the budget under the meetings committee.

**ACTION ITEM:** Ed will research the projector.

**Other Meetings:**

The next meeting should be out of California, i.e., Hawaii, Utah, etc.

Ed: I would vote for going to Utah maybe in the spring. There is a great community of birders and we have never been there. The problem is that we need a local person who can act as liaison for the field trips, possibly Salt Lake City.

Bryce: I know the birding community and there aren't any ornithologists there. There is Hawks International that would have a lot of birders, but working with WFO is a question. There are some birders in southern Utah but it's a drive to Salt Lake City.

Dan: The Great Salt Lake Birding Festival is in May.

**ACTION ITEM:** Bryce will check Utah possibilities and report back on his efforts.

**1:35pm**

**Student Programs Committee:** (Homer)

We have 9 scholars, (Keith Bruce, Ezra Cohen, Dorian Escalante, Max Leibowitz, Reed Gorner, Julia Wong, John Wilson, Will Salter, Cedric Kraynak), at the conference with a total of 22 attendees (some of those are past recipients) participating in activities. Lena Hayashi and Susan Gilliland have worked very hard to bring this about. There will be some poster boards to introduce the scholars. We are having a reception of Fri. night, something for the parents and there is a field trip planned.

Budget: Primarily Chris and I have been talking about long-term funding.

**Discussion:**

A lively discussion ensued.

Jon: There is a difference of opinion on the Board as to the financial security of the Scholarship Committee. It's great to have the high school kids there and the undergraduates. I believe that we have been lucky with a couple of major donations, but I don't see this as dependable. Setting up long-term planning is indicated, as by the time we get down to $15,000 the warning bells should go off that we are out of money. If there is $40,000 in the account and we gave $25,000 it would leave a balance of $15,000. If we didn't get significant donations, that is roughly 3 years out. This means
we need to garner at least $7,000 per year in donations or decrease the number of scholarships. I would not propose diverting money from the General Fund to the Scholarship Fund. I would rather plan well ahead. If we get donations that gives us more flexibility. This is something I worry about and am stating it for discussion. I don't know if the Board should dictate that or if the Scholarship Committee should make a recommendation. I believe in planning ahead, so if we get major donations we can be more flexible. This is very important. The scholarship amount right now is about $40,000.

Ed: They may not be real dollars as some of that money goes from the general fund to WFO, i.e., what the scholars pay to WFO for registration, etc., The reason I see no point in worrying about this is that with the $40,000 in the fund, you are only spending $10,000 a year. In the 11 years that the fund has been in existence, we have only spent $20,000. The Board gets to decide every year if we are spending the appropriate amount, so I don't see the need for a discussion right now.

Chris: As Fundraising Chair I see my job as working with committees, in this case, promoting and marketing the scholarship committee. With scholarship, we don’t have a real promotion program yet. I plan to work with Homer and Kurt to see what ways we can reach different groups, i.e., Audubon Chapters, individual donors, other ideas, to get some kind of flow of funds into the scholarship fund hopefully on a regular basis to augment the money that has already come in. Trips are a good source of funding. I think there is an audience out there that we can tap into that very much appreciates what we are doing. This is something we have not done yet. So, I want to work with the committee to get that going.

Jon: The name of the scholarship committee is now The Student Programs Committee. We have two funds: The WFO Publications Fund and the Michael R. San Miguel Student Scholarship Fund. In the WFO Publications Fund, if we run out of money, we just don’t put out special publications. In the Michael R. San Miguel Scholarship Fund the recipients get sent to the conference with the membership. It is an annual commitment. It is a dagger pointed at the budget every year. For this issue, I would like to have some flexibility whether you keep the $15,000 balance. That’s 3 plus years. If the money doesn’t increase substantially we might have to decrease scholarships.

Wendy: The scholarships are very popular with the membership. It’s the sole reason why I joined the Board. I think we can count on membership to help, but we need a plan or campaign in place.

ACTION ITEM: Kurt: This topic will continue to be discussed.

Kurt: There are other things we could vote on in the Student Programs Committee. Three years ago, the Board approved to have 2 graduate scholars along with 6 other scholars for a total of 8. This was approved on a 1-year trial basis and it was never reapproved. It’s been three years. The committee still has 2 positions open for undergraduates, and if undergraduates don’t apply or aren’t accepted then those positions go to high school students. We should put it to a Board vote. That allows the committee to continue to offer these 2 undergraduate scholarships as we have been doing for the last 3 years.

Jon: I don’t believe in giving the undergraduates/graduates a free conference like the high school scholarships. Give the older scholars more responsibility with their stipend and let them figure out how they are going to spend it. There are legal obligations too; if they are under 18 they need to be chaperoned, but if they are over 18 they are adults this should be part of the life decisions they are making, i.e., ‘I can stay at a cheaper place across the street.’
Chris: Mark Scheel and Lance Benner from Pasadena Audubon must be on the subcommittee for graduate students.

Jon: You can have a subcommittee pick, reserve one of those spots for an undergrad, but this again would reduce the number of high school scholarships to 6. The way it is now, if undergrads do not apply we offer those to high schoolers. You have x number of dollars you are going to spend in each year. However, you decide to divide up that pie, that’s up to you if you decide to bring in a couple of college undergrads or graduates you are going to get only 4 high schoolers. There is only so much you can award in each year.

Wendy: This supports our mission statement, building ornithologists for the future. It is only two positions that we are trying to help encourage each year. I do think it is important for the whole organization to embrace that. I am not necessarily bothered by the age anymore. I do think the quality of the applicant is important, but I think we can foster a lot of membership donations with younger students. What I see is the WFO organization sponsoring older students to carry them through for our benefit.

John G.: Sometimes I wish the organization was a little heavier on the ornithological side. I think having undergrads present would help in getting them familiar with some of the ornithological aspects.

Steve: I would make a vigorous distinction between high school and younger and undergrads/graduates. I think it is a little much to expect undergrads who may already be doing research to present something that we may want to hear. It is a time when they are trying to figure out what they are interested in and what they are going to do, so I think it is great to primarily focus on the young students. I see an undergrad more different from a graduate than from a junior or senior high school student. They are trying to figure out what they are doing, and I think WFO should foster that. I also support stipends to graduates.

John H.: 1) If you have an undergraduate come to a meeting here I think it is unrealistic to expect them to remain members of WFO. What happens if they go to graduate school in Florida for instance? 2) A lot of colleges are getting into undergraduate research programs. We have one for instance at Occidental, and there is one at Mills to name two. Elisa Yang just went to LSU. These students get integrated into a faculty member’s research program and it is unlikely that they would be coming and presenting a sole authored original research paper, but coming and presenting with the professor or post-doctorate, where they are part of the project - that’s good. 3) Finally for me the graduate student level needs additional perspectives other than the developmental perspective that we have discussed. Our organization would be healthier if it had more young professionals or graduate students.

Motion made by Homer to allow the Student Programs Committee to add 2 additional scholarships is in addition to the other 6 that we have been doing for the last 3 years, and continue to improve the program as detailed by Jon. This is just for the undergrad specifically and not the graduate level. (No vote)

Ed makes a motion to approve awards to include undergraduates

Amended Motion: Ed moves an amended motion to offer 8 scholarships of which a maximum of 2 can be offered to undergraduate scholarships. Seconded by Wendy and passed with 12 in favor, 2 opposed and 1 abstention. The motion carries.
Dan: I want to introduce Bob Day from Alaska who worked on seabirds for many years in the Bering, the Chukchi, and the Beaufort Seas. He finally retired after decades in Fairbanks and has moved to Arkansas.

Kurt: We should make a motion regarding assigning a subcommittee which would deal with graduate stipends and who would decide such things as the amount of the stipend and how many stipends we might award based on our budget in any given year. Those details will be worked out by the committee. We would like to invite Chris, Bryce, Steve, and Matt to be on the committee.

Dan: Just to be clear, we are sending the application out to professors for both graduates and undergraduates.

Jon: Will you have a chair of the subcommittee? Steve volunteers to be the Chair of the Subcommittee to the Student Programs Committee.

Motion: Wendy moves to create a subcommittee under the Student Programs Committee to approve graduate student stipends, seconded by Steve and passed unanimously.

Jon: We won’t know until October what amount, if any, Pasadena Audubon will donate to the Student Programs Committee.

Kurt: Should we have a motion to change the name of the Publications Committee, since Kimball received the permission from the San Miguel family. They are happy if Mike’s name is preserved on the scholarship committee; because of the diversity of fund sources for publications we would have a more generic name for that.

ACTION ITEM: Kimball will notify the family as new scholarship recipients are announced.

Motion made by Ed to accept the new name for the Scholarship Fund, The Michael R. San Miguel Student Scholarship Fund and the Publications Fund will be known as the WFO Publications Fund, seconded by Kimball and passed unanimously.

Website Subcommittee Bryce:

I need to find out who can do some of the set up on the website, I know what needs to be done

Discussion:

Phil: TimBrittain and I have worked together very closely for 30 years. He is very experienced, so he can work with Bryce to do whatever he directs. We need to tell him that Bryce is the head of our website committee and any changes through the website will come through him with a few exceptions. (Diane sends information on updates to trip lists and descriptions; Liga sends approved minutes)

Bryce: There needs to be a rebuild. It is not easy for young people to go in there and find information and enjoy the experience which is a big part of web design. I also need to get an idea what is desired, so I can come to you with some designs. It will not be cheap.

Phil: It would be a good idea to come up with an outline of what we want to have done and then say to Tim what is it going to cost to get there, so he can bid on that.
The consensus of the Board is for Bryce to go forth with the necessary plans and procedures to rebuild our website. All agree.

3:03pm

FIELD TRIPS:

WFO retreat Palm Desert October 12-14, 2019

Kurt: We have a retreat coming up in October in Palm Desert. Friday the 11th, is the Salton Sea trip with Guy McCaskie. Saturday and Sunday, we will get down to business. We are working on the draft Agenda, so Suzanne and I have had a meeting to work out topics. We have been able to take some topics off today’s plate and put them on the October plate for the longer-term topics. We are asking for ideas from everybody whether you are coming in October or not.

Colombia November 2019: Phil just filled his Colombia trip

Tasmania January 2020: (Kurt) Tasmania (November 2020) still has 2 openings but it is not critical that we fill them.

Cuba 2020: We are still going to Cuba in fall 2020.

     AI: We are still looking for other fund-raising trips so please contribute if you can and let Kurt know.

CONSERVATION/SCIENCE POLICY:

John H: Something came around regarding what was happening to the University of Alaska Museum of the North. The government wanted to cut the museum out of the budget completely, etc. The Mammal Society was urging people to write letters, so I forwarded the letter to Steve and Kurt. Kimball wrote a fabulous letter. The Board of Regents of the University of Alaska was receptive to the comments they received in the letter.

Dan: They were very glad to receive it as they heard from many people and the Governor backed down on the whole thing which means the Board of Regents can walk back from its position of exigency to budgeting 25 million for this year and an additional 25 for next year. Nobody knows how that will affect accreditation. Already there are researchers who had already left and gone to other institutions with their multi-million-dollar grants. Thanks to Kimball and everyone for responding so quickly.

Kimball: This is the kind of thing we had to respond to, as this is what the whole committee is set up for. If it is anything remotely controversial we do not respond with such speed. We got it all done in a single day.

Motion made to go into Executive Session made by Homer and seconded by Dan and passed unanimously.

Motion made to come out of Executive Session made by Kimball and seconded by Dan and passed unanimously.

Motion made by Dan, seconded by Wendy to continue with the current slate of officers and to re-nominate Diane Rose and Ed Pandolfino for the two vacant Board positions.
Let’s welcome our two new Board members, Diane Rose and Ed Pandolfino (upon approval of the membership).

**Old Business:**

**Colorado Field Ornithologists (CFO).**

Kurt: Their whole Board of Directors has changed. Hopefully our partnership will remain as I get introduced to the new President. Three key people retired at once. We will try to continue to build up our partnership with them.

**ACTION ITEM:** Meet with Larry Modesitt(CFO) at this conference for any updates.

**New Business:**

3:35pm  **By-Laws Subcommittee: (Jon)**

I have already edited the by-laws with some small changes. I would like the Board to give at least a consensus on these small changes, make recommendations, and further discuss it at the retreat if need be and report back to the Board. Two people volunteered to be on the subcommittee, Karen and Homer. There aren’t any major changes. No motion is necessary now.

3:40pm  **Mentoring New Board Members: (Jon)**

This is something not only for new members but maybe some of the other Board members too. We want to make the experience welcoming for the newer Board members who have gotten on the Board in the last few years. We as a Board can do a lot to help the newer Board members as to what is expected, make it more comfortable, and a little less imposing. We would like to get your input if you are at the retreat and/or sending in suggestions. We will try to prepare a welcoming document to handout.

Bryce: I don’t know about things you could do better, but I didn’t know what to do when I joined. I think one suggestion might be to ask a potential Board member about their strengths. Maybe getting an understanding of someone’s skills set even if it is not directly related to the reason why the candidate was nominated. I think providing the new Board member with the financial statements would be a good thing.

Kimball: One thing ought to be made clear to new Board Members. While we strive for geographical diversity on the Board, we don’t always attain it, but we do expect the member to be the ambassador for their region.

3:47pm  **50th Anniversary of California/Western Birds (WB) (2020) (Kurt)**

**ACTION ITEM:** Next year is the 50th anniversary of California/Western Birds so we must think of ways to celebrate it.

It is the 45th Annual conference and we decided that 2020 is the year to celebrate the 50th year anniversary.
Discussion:

Ed: It makes sense to have the Sabine’s gull design as it is possible to see one on the north shore of Lake Tahoe.

Kurt: For the T-shirt we might go back to the front design only with a Sabine’s gull and the 50th anniversary logo.

Jon: The Sabine’s gull logo was designed by Ginger Johnson. The actual anniversary date is Aug. 14, 1970.

Dan: We could get designs for lots of Sabine’s gulls throughout its range.

Kurt: We should put the Sabine’s gull on the cover of WB next year.

3:55pm Motion: Steve moves to adjourn, seconded by Kimball and passed unanimously.