

**Western Field Ornithologists' Board of Directors Meeting
Conference Call, May 24, 2011, 12noon – 1:40pm PDT**

Minutes prepared by Liga Auzins, *Rec. Sec.*

Board Members present: Brian Sullivan, David Quady, W. Dave Shuford, *Pres.*, Debbie Van Dooremolen, Edward R. Pandolfino, *Vice Pres.*, Jay Withgott, Jon L. Dunn, Kenneth Able, Kimball L. Garrett, Kurt Leuschner, Osvel Hinojosa-Huerta, Robbie Fischer, *Treas.*, *Membership Sec'y*, Robert E. Gill, Thomas P. Ryan
Guests: Catherine Waters, *Past President*, Philip Unitt, *Editor, Western Birds*
Board Members Absent: Carol Beardmore

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ACTION ITEM SUMMARY

Action Item 1: Signing of contract for 2012 Petaluma Meeting by Ed

Action Item 2: Meet with WOS as part of outreach and possible meeting collaboration by Jon

Action Item 3: Contacting President of WOS, Jack Stevens by Ed

Action Item 4: Suggestions for additions to mission statement on website by Brian

Action Item 5: Update on possible abstract submissions deadline by Debbie

Action Item 6: Form a committee to consider the details of dispensing the San Miguel Fund by DaveS.

Action Item 7: Future membership strategies by Brian and Ed

Action Item 8: Investigating options for an independent financial review by Cat

Action Item 9: Recommendations to Board for the WFO Award by DaveQ

Action Item 10: Remainder of Agenda to be carried forth to August Meeting by DaveS

MINUTES

12:00 p.m. Meeting called to order, roll call, welcome

12:05pm Acceptance of minutes from February 9, 2011 Board of Directors Meeting.

Ed moves to approve minutes, DaveQ seconds, all approve to accept minutes

President reviews agenda explaining that the order of topics on Agenda reflect importance as to discussion, including resolving the San Miguel Fund and the award in field ornithology through WFO. If we run short on time, things that are primarily updates as opposed to discussion will be presented at the Sierra Vista Meeting.

2011 Sierra Vista Meeting Plan

- **Update: Ed:** Registration for Sierra Vista is currently an outstanding 133. We will be able to accommodate no more than 170 to 190 people.

Status of 2012 Petaluma Meeting

- **Update:** Ed: We are ready to sign the contract with the Sheraton in Petaluma. We are looking at September 26-30, 2012 in Petaluma. If there are no conflicts I will get the contract signed this week.

Potential Meeting Options for 2013 and beyond

- **Update:** Ed: The Conference site for 2013 will be outside of California. The Black Hills Audubon Society in Olympia, WA, expressed an interest in helping with a meeting in Olympia the 2nd or 3rd week in September of 2013 but also the 2013 conference is still wide open for other options. WA and UT jump out as 2 states that have a lot of people and very few WFO members. I can contact the President of WOS, Jack Stevens.
- **Discussion:** Jon: I am willing to meet with WOS to talk about issues as part of outreach. It is fine to coordinate with the Olympia group but WOS should be brought in early to see how they would like to approach it. I think WOS has better potential in bringing in more like members who would be likely to be WFO members.
- Jay: In my opinion, WOS is one of the strongest state organizations in the West so partnering with them would be important to WFO. This does not mean that we do not have to work with Olympia Audubon nor that we cannot approach Seattle Audubon and Portland Audubon as well.
- Brian: In my work with e-bird throughout the West, WA is one of the most active states. I am wondering if WFO has any language on their site that specifically discusses the way they see themselves in relation to other state or local ornithological groups, i.e., if I am a member of WOS, why would I also want to be a member of WFO? I am still preparing a document to send around to you with some suggested changes, but I don't see any clear language that tells me why WOS should want WFO to come into their state.
- Jon: May I throw out Montana as a consideration tentatively for 2015 now unless there is any opposition?
- Brian: I would like to consider Utah as I feel there is great potential there.
- DaveS: I was just looking at the Utah website and the Utah Ornithological Society (UOS) is dissolved and their journal is no longer going to be published. It might be a really opportunity to have some of those people join in with WFO to meet some of the needs that their current organization is no longer going to meet.

Abstract Submissions for Sierra Vista

- **Update:** Debbie: Currently our submitted abstract number is pretty low. We are 2 weeks out from the deadline of June 10th. So far the submissions are largely California focused. Other than our special presentations that are opening up the sessions, we don't really have anything for Arizona or New Mexico or anything adjacent. If any of the Board members have anyone that they think would be a good person for Dave or I to contact and solicit directly, please e-mail me or follow up with them. If we plan to extend the deadline we will e-mail you in the next several days, but we need to start putting the Abstract Program together soon.

12:25 San Miguel Fund

Suggested options for spending funds in line with family's wishes

- **Update:** Cat: I was tasked by the Board to break down the combination of proposals, something that the Board could use as a guideline for their decision on how the San Miguel Funds will be used.
Proposals for San Miguel Fund: 1. Western Birds(WB); 2. Scholarship; 3. Expansion of expedition program

Kimball led the *ad hoc* committee in a discussion as to how the funds should be used. The committee was comprised of Kimball who represented Board, Jon Feenstra who represented the membership and Michael San Miguel who represented the family.

Proposal 1: *Western Birds*

- **Update:** Cat: The committee's number one proposal was to have the money used to enhance *WB*. The committee felt that Mike was all about *WB* and Western Field Ornithologists.
- **Discussion:** Kimball: We were certainly looking along the lines of more color but we are not limited to that. The greatest difficulty is how do you, with each issue, acknowledge the San Miguel Fund
- Phil: Any issue of *WB* can have the inside covers specify whatever in it is made possible by the San Miguel Fund.

Proposal 2: Scholarship

- **Update:** Cat: The second proposal is to use the fund for full youth scholarships to attend our meeting. There also was a research scholarship that was an amalgam of two different proposals which looked at a college student who has a current field ornithology project where they are looking at a crucial piece of research. The caveat that goes with this is how do we know that the awardee will finish the research and stay in the field of ornithology? This year the Scholarship Committee and the Finance Committee set up a scholarship using the Pasadena Audubon tribute to Mike San Miguel. We have a paid scholarship for two students to come to our meetings. We will review this every year as it can be afforded and we agreed to add to the fund every year. It is up to the Board to decide how they want to use the rest of these funds.
- Robbie: There is almost \$7,000 in the Pasadena Audubon /WFO Youth Scholarship Fund that is to be utilized for attending meetings. That is totally separate from the \$12,000 in the San Miguel Fund.
- **Discussion:** Jon: Mike San Miguel raised money by initiating the idea of the publications fund. That is what he most strongly believed in and that's where I think the money that was raised should go
- Ken: Publications are the flagship of WFO. It is the most important thing we do. I think it would be a very appropriate honor to have his name associated with our flagship activity.

Proposal 3: Expanding our Expedition Program

- **Discussion:** Kimball: Because I knew how much Mike loved to explore poorly known areas and to lead trips into difficult to reach areas, I brought this up in committee even though I felt there was not a strong consensus. Our expedition program to this point is mostly self-supporting, therefore this might not be the best use of the fund.
- DaveS: I am highly supportive of getting youth on expeditions and whether that came through the San Miguel Fund or the other scholarship fund, it wouldn't be important to me. To me scholarships that get people to meetings are important. People get to see the results of field work, people's expertise, etc. Expeditions would actually get people out in the field with top notch field people and involve them with gathering data, i.e., Sonora.
- Ed: My hesitation about putting the money aside for expeditions is that you want to make sure that this money is being actively used. The expeditions are really dependent on having a Board member that is really enthusiastic about putting them together and organizing them. Sometime in the future we might not have that and I could see the money kind of sitting there, whereas if the money were in the publications fund it could be used for things like color, photography or any other publication thing. I vote for Proposal 1.
- Brian: Do you see the \$12,000 putting *WB* into full color format for as long as the funds last and then sort of being done?

- Phil: One color signature generally adds a cost of about \$350 per issue. The question sometimes is can we afford two color signatures rather than just one in a single issue if there are multiple contributions with color. It is not quite so simple a question but if we were just to go ahead and spend the money then that would pay for color signatures for quite a number of years.
- Kimball: If I were making a motion it would be along the lines that the consensus of the Board is to direct the San Miguel Fund to be applied to our flagship publication, *WB*, and leave the details out for the moment of exactly how much of that is for color and for something else. I also think that the discussions we've had in regards to the other options have been great. We couldn't have asked for a better exercise in determining our goals for future fundraising by going through these other possibilities. I don't think the money is enough to try to split among 2 or 3 of these options.
- Jon: How much is in the publications fund right now, separate from the San Miguel Fund?
- Robbie: \$13,000. One of the things we want to do is have a committee determine the specifics of the San Miguel Fund. I think keeping that separate at this time makes a lot of sense. It allows us more freedom to choose to do other types of things with the money that people have donated and it is not all for publications. A lot of times people just donate to what they consider to be a general fund.
- Jon: When Mike fundraised, it was for a publications fund. There should be an existing publications fund that should not be used for other things. It is a fund that is different from the money contributed by people in Mike's memory. Otherwise we would be dishonest to the people that contributed to the publications fund when Mike was alive. DaveS: I agree this fund should be separate.
- **Action:** Kimball: I will make a general motion, but the details should be determined by a committee, the details being how the money is to be allocated and acknowledged. My simplest motion would be that the San Miguel Fund be directed toward WFO's publications, in particular, *WB*. Ken seconds
- **Motion:** Passed by quorum, if not unanimously.
- DaveS: We should form a committee to figure out the details, but we can leave that for later and I will try to contact some of the key people and get that in motion separate from this meeting.

12:55pm Finance and Membership

- **Update:** Robbie: The updates on finances are all down on paper. Are there any questions?
- **Discussion:** Dave S: I would like to know the bottom line, i.e., what is our financial cushion? We have this larger figure of \$162,000 and then we have operating capital and various other things. It seems like there is also a category that I would call temporarily restricted or obligated funds and that would be the conference where we have taken in money and that obviously will go to the conference. The same goes for the South Central Sierra trip and *WB* and membership dues which go straight to the publication of *WB*. I wonder what money do we have that is not obligated to any of those kinds of things.
- Robbie: I did the budget, which is actual, that tells you what the expected income is and the expected outflow. I did that as of December and I will do it again in June. I would prefer answering that this July when I have all the bank statements and everything. DaveS: That's fine.

1:00pm Membership Trends

- **Update:** Robbie: I have sent out information on the Membership over the last 5 years as of the end of April and membership by state. Ed created a graph which led to some discussion earlier as to where our opportunities lie.

- **Discussion:** DaveQ: Looking at your May 20th report, you refer to membership, but you are measuring numbers of copies of *WB* mailed. There is a single membership figure for each calendar year. How should I interpret numbers of copies mailed in relation to numbers of members?
- Robbie: The majority of the number of copies mailed are going to people who have paid for subscriptions. There are some special cases, i.e., Cat gets 3 copies of each issue as does Peter LaTourette. We exchange copies of *WB*. Phil gets copies of journals from other states and countries. We mail them *WB* and they mail to SDMNH a copy of their journal. I think that amounts to less than 50 copies that are not paid memberships. I don't want you to think that 996 people all paid members. They are not.
- DaveQ: So the figures in your May 20th e-mail are larger by approximately 50 from year to year.
- Robbie: Correct. The bottom line is that we had a dip in memberships in April of 2010 when 916 copies were mailed. In April of 2011 there were 996 copies mailed. In 2009 we had over 1,000. By and large I am anticipating that we are going to run close to 1,000 copies of *WB* mailed for this year. Our retention rate is about 50% from those people that sign up and attend meetings.
- Brian: Do we have an idea of what our target membership number would be? It looks as if it's been pretty flat for the last 5 years. My question is, if we wanted to double the membership in a few years, is it possible to put together a committee that discusses how to do that. I have some ideas about ways that we could essentially reach out in the birding community, but I am wondering how the Board feels about that.
- Kimball: We all have this general sense that we want to grow but competing against that is what we have seen happen to some organizations that in the name of increasing memberships they lose sight of their core mission.
- DaveS: Brian would you be willing to put some ideas and thoughts together to increase our membership to the birding world? Brian: Absolutely. I'd like to do that. I think it goes hand in hand with some of the messaging stuff I've been looking at on the website.
- Kimball: Just as an example of what I said earlier about not changing our mission. I hear from a lot of WFO members that they don't really read *WB* much because it is too technical. So we could agree that we could make it fluffier and not put in all that technical stuff and we might get more members but I don't believe anybody in this meeting thinks that is something that we ought to do. The real question is, of the people who are the key target audience of *WB* and of our meetings who aren't members, why don't we have them in our tent. That's the approach I think that we have to take.
- Brian: We are doing well with the amateur/professional birders and academia, but there are a lot of people working professionally, i.e., consulting, that I don't think we hit very well. When Kimball said that many WFO members do not read our publication, the take home message for me is that there is an entire audience out there that values what WFO does but doesn't necessarily really like our product, but they might not have to, so I don't think we necessarily have to change the product but we have to find a bigger group of people that think what we do is important. So maybe that is a message we want to send, that what we do is important.
- **Action:** DaveS: This is a really valuable discussion and Brian could you put together some thoughts and we could have a larger discussion at the Sierra Vista meeting in August. Brian: I can't be there.
- Ed: I'd be willing to, and anyone else who is interested, to have a conference call between now and August and talk about some ideas. I am willing to take the lead and participate. DaveS: That would be great.

1:18pm

External audit/financial review

- **Update:** Cat: Last year I promised that I would go out and shop for less expensive insurance for directors, officers and liability for WFO. I went to a number of nonprofit insurance pools that looked like they would fit our needs. They all asked me for a current financial review or a current audit which I could not provide, whereby they refused to quote for us. An audit would be very expensive, a financial review would be less so. I would like to have it done independently and to ask the Board for the funds to do this. Our goal is to probably accomplish this before the end of the year. We want to have a document that we can show to some of the insurance pools and others that we are a sound organization and have this verified independently.
- **Discussion:** Phil: Is the cost of the audit going to be greater than what we might save on the insurance?
- Cat: It would be a savings over a number of years as opposed to within any given year. The State of California only requires an annual audit for non-profits that have 2 million dollars or more in assets. The guidelines for a financial review are a little bit different. The insurance companies and others are willing to accept that less arduous process. So many small non-profits, if something does go wrong, can no longer meet the deductible on their insurance policies so they want to see financial soundness before they will even quote on insurance.
- **Action:** DaveS: This seems like sound financial management to periodically review our finances. It may help us out, it may give us advice on things we could improve or simplify, etc. What Cat is asking is, if there are any objections to the Finance Committee investigating this further in order to come up with a proposal on how to move forward.
- **Decision:** No objections verbally voiced by a quorum.

1:23pm

DaveS: It is 1:23pm and we talked about adjourning at 1:30pm so we will not be able to cover everything on the agenda. I would like to spend the remaining time on the awards and if anyone has something important to communicate on Publications, Outreach or Field Trips that has not been communicated to the Board by the reports that people have distributed recently, now is the time to speak up. (No response) Let's proceed with discussing the Awards.

Awards Committee Recommendations on Swarth Award

- **Update:** DaveQ: I hope that we could agree that we will establish the Harry S. Swarth Award in Western Field Ornithology and will retain the wording that was in my e-mail note. The award will honor an individual's body of work including peer reviewed publications that significantly advances descriptive field ornithology in the West with the list of subjects that might constitute that body of work. There were the issues of who should be eligible for the award, where should publications occur, and must the recipient be a member of WFO. My sense from the replies was to not impose restrictions on potential recipients and trust the good judgment of the Awards Committee when they vet nominees for consideration of recommending one recipient to the whole Board for approval. The Board would provide the following direction to the Awards Committee: that there be no requirements on where the publications appear except that some must appear in peer reviewed journals and that the Awards Committee will consider the contributions of professional and nonprofessional ornithologists alike. That is the proposal I put forward. I now turn to folks who wish to change one or more aspects of that.
- **Discussion:** Cat: I think we should name the award for ourselves. We are a wonderful organization. I think that we have a nice footprint; we have a wonderful membership; we have stature; we have a flagship publication; we are the who's who of birding in the West in terms of name recognition; and that we should be giving the WFO Award for excellence.
- Jay: In addition to picking out any one name, whether it is Harry Swarth or Joseph Grinnell or Annie Alexander, different people may differ on who to model as the best person for this award so I think it might just be a more

comfortable thing to avoid that issue altogether by calling it the WFO Award. It puts our organization front and center, after all we are the ones who are awarding and funding this award.

- Brian: I like the name as it gives us more exposure and that's a good thing.
- DaveS: I think the WFO Award would be a good choice.
- Jon: We spent a lot of time discussing Harry S. Swarth. We have existing Swarth family members who would probably embrace it. I know that Dan was very concerned that the recipient should be a WFO member, but I think some compromise language should be found to satisfy these objections. We could anticipate that such a person would be a WFO member but such a requirement is not mandated.
- Ken: With regard to the name of the award I found Cat's arguments compelling and as to my feeling about calling the award the long combined title, I might look on with favor only if this was an endowed award. I think it is probably fair to say that Harry S. Swarth is not exactly a household name even among western ornithologists. I am inclined to lean towards calling it the WFO Award.
- DaveQ: We will work on a title for award that does not include Swarth's name. I am more comfortable including unwritten guidance to the Awards Committee as to the awardee being a WFO member. There are many ornithologists out there who are not members and it just does not feel right to make it a requirement.
- Kimball: The wording for the award I think should be as general as possible without too many specifics but that an internal set of guidelines for choosing the awardee might weigh some things or be a little more specific along the lines of some of the things the committee came up with.
- Robbie: Is there going to be an application or is this going to be something that the committee will search far and wide and come up with their suggestions?
- DaveQ: My thought was that we would advertise for nominations in WFO and we would encourage Board members individually to nominate people. The Awards Committee would review nominations on some schedule make a recommendation to the Board. For the first few years there would be a fair pool of people to consider and so an award every other year for the first ten years wouldn't surprise me.
- Kimball: Dave I saw it differently. I assumed that it would be internally generated from a committee, but I hadn't really seen an external application or a request for a nominees type thing
- DaveQ: But should not the existence of the award be publicized in *WB* beforehand?
- Jon: I think the award should be given every 3-5 years, making it rare and special, not an expectation.
- **Action:** DaveS: DaveQ considering all the input you have received, do you want to make a motion to move this forward so we can vote on how to proceed?
- DaveQ: If you think it necessary, but what I propose to do is take these comments and with the Awards Committee move closer to making a recommendation for approval when we meet in August. We will also add on the subject of what would be the nature of the award, i.e., what would the recipient receive. While we were talking I received an e-mail from Bob Gill from China through an internet café in which he said that he thought that Ken had touched on the key issues, that we shouldn't limit the award recipients to WFO members. I don't feel a need for a motion to be approved in order to move forward. DaveS: That is fine with me

1:38pm Adjournment of meeting

- DaveS: Although I am willing to continue on and talk about the other items, I am respectful of people's time so we could put these topics off until our next meeting in August and make sure they get high on the priority list next time. Various members respond that they have to leave.
- DaveS: I want to thank people for putting their items on the agenda list. I think a lot of these items have been circulated as reports but I do want to have their voice heard although we do not have time today. I want to thank everybody for participating in the discussion and look forward to seeing you in person in August.
- **1:40pm** Meeting adjourned and remainder of agenda to be reviewed at the Sierra Vista meeting in August.

Respectfully submitted,

Liga Auzins
Rec. Secretary