

Western Field Ornithologists Board of Directors
43rd Annual Board of Directors Conference Meeting
Ventura, Ca.
Thursday September 27, 2018 11am – 5pm

Minutes prepared by Liga Auzins Wurster, *Rec. Sec'y.*

Board Members present:; Tom Blackman, *Pres.*; Kurt Leuschner, *Vice Pres.*; Dave Quady, *Past Pres.*; Suzanne Carota, *Treas./Membership Sec'y.*; Liga Auzins Wurster, *Rec. Sec'y.*; Ken Able, Wendy Beers, Jon Dunn, John Garrett, Kimball Garrett, Homer Hansen, John Harris, Karen Anderson Havlena, Larry Modesitt, Steve Rottenborn, W. Dave Shuford.

Guests: Phil Unit, *Editor, Western Birds (WB)*, Bryce Robinson, Catherine Waters, Christopher Swarth, Dan Gibson,

MINUTES

11:50am Meeting called to order, welcome and roll.

Minutes from May 2, 2018 accepted unanimously via motion to approve by Diane and seconded by Kimball.

FINANCE: (Suzanne)

- As of August 31st, our cash balance is \$353,000 which includes \$140,000 in the Publications Fund and \$31,000 in the Scholarship Fund. There was an anonymous donor matching fund of \$10,000 to the Scholarship Fund. As of February, we have received \$5,700 in matching donations. We received some donations from the Eastern Sierra Trip so I will ask the matching donor if she is willing to match that sort of a donation. Leaders of the special fundraising trips can designate the 50% of the profits to the fund of their choice. The other 50% goes to the general fund. The Scholarship Committee is doing an envelope pledge at our banquet this Saturday evening.
- The full year budget is expected to show a loss of \$20,000, mostly due to the publications. Otherwise we are way ahead, but we have a lot of bills to pay for the conference and books.
- In looking at the 10-year history of our conferences (see handout), the total income is \$81,357, averaging about \$8,000/yr. The average for the in-state Ca conferences is \$13,000 and for the out-of-state conferences is \$3,500, a \$10,000 difference. The profitability per participant came to about \$60 per person in Ca and \$3 per person outside of Ca. This \$81,000 represents about 23% of our current assets. It is a considerable contributor. In comparing Fortuna and Ventura Conferences where the attendee number was approximately the same, the profitability of Fortuna was greater as the expenses were considerably less due to location. Pelagic trips (where possible) make considerable contributions to a conference.
- We try to alternate our meetings between California and out-of-state every other year, and then further separate the California years into Southern California and Northern California.

- Currently we are in an excellent cash position. In the last 10-year history of all trips the profit number was approximately \$94,439 (including an estimate this year's trip to Cuba) which exceeds the amount we brought in from conferences (\$81,357) and represents 27% of our assets. In looking at the Publications Fund, where the trip proceeds are split up, (50% goes to the general fund and the other 50% is designated by the leaders to go to a particular fund). 30% of the total has gone to the Publications Fund. Since 2002 trips have contributed \$50,000 to the Publications Fund. Since 2009 (the last 10 years) the figure has been \$30,000. The Publications Fund is something that we take very seriously as we use it for a lot of important projects.
- We need to thank Jon, Kimball, John Harris, Debbie House and Dave Q. for leading these very successful fundraising trips. We need additional Board members to step up to do this as this revenue is greater than the revenue from the conferences. The trips can be more than just the income; they create goodwill and loyalty to WFO.

12:11pm Membership: (Suzanne)

Report: We currently have 1100 members (which includes 205 Life members, 9 Patrons and 22 Foreign members). 125 people joined WFO which partially offsets the 170 members who did not renew, for a net decrease in membership of 45 since December 31, 2017. The last 10-year history of our membership shows that the trend line is slightly increasing with a peak in 2015. The important 5-year trend line is going down. We always go through this issue at renewal time where there are all these people who have not renewed and how to get them to do so. I am starting to reconsider my emphasis on that because I think that many people will not renew, but we are going to get a lot of replacements.

Discussion: Is there any relationship of decreasing membership to increasing availability of WB electronically? Are we losing members because they don't have to join in order to read the journal **WB**? That might explain why the Fortuna Conference did not get a great increase in memberships as it was a time when we were transitioning into digital access. There is a whole group of people who rejoin every even number of years so they can go to the CA conference and they don't renew for the odd years because they don't go out of state. Thinking more broadly, we might want to look at what we might expect from membership fees and then go ahead and plan our funding raising trips to see how much money we need to raise per year to cover our costs.

If you look at the Statement of Activities Report (handout), each column shows an activity and the bottom number shows how much it contributes. Operating expenses for the 2018 is a negative \$8,000 and the budget is a negative \$14,720. Those are the fixed amounts that we must cover trips, conferences, etc. The second column is **WB** as a function of membership income. This is the first year that our membership income has exceeded the cost of **WB**. Our printing costs have come down and we have increased membership dues several times. Operating costs always need to be covered by conferences, scholarships, trips or publication projects.

12:35pm Silent Auction: Two years ago, the Board decided that 100% of the proceeds of the silent auction would go to the Publications Committee as they were doing the work. This year the Scholarship Committee is helping.

The motion by Kimball that there is a 50/50 split of the proceeds of the Silent Book Auction between the Publications and Scholarship Committees funds including a 50/50 split of labor, which might include members of neither committee as it is a Board activity, until the Board decides otherwise, seconded by Diane, and passed unanimously.

California Check List: Thank you Steve Rottenborn for redoing the California Check List and getting it delivered in time for our Ventura Conference. It cost \$475 to print 300 copies. Instead of charging WFO, Steve personally donated those funds to the next CBRC report for page charges. Although we had budgeted money for this, the CBRC will still need to raise funds for page charges.

ACTION ITEM: The Publications Committee will take on the associated responsibilities of handling the California Check List, i.e., reprints, work with Buteo Books, put it on the website, etc.

NOTE: Phishing: Suzanne regularly gets phishing e-mails from people who claim to be members of the Board. Do not reply to them and do not open them, but in a separate e-mail send a message to the Board member.

Birds of North America (BNA) discount: Brooke Keeney from Cornell wants to know if we want to offer to conference attendees a 40% one year discount subscription to **BNA** (a savings of \$25.00).

Discussion: What would WFO have to do to be part of that, and could they extend this to all our membership as a benefit; and could we also put that on our Facebook page and then anyone who looks at our Facebook page could get the discount?

ACTION ITEM: Kimball, Tom and Suzanne offer to talk to Brooke about the possibilities.

12:50pm

By-Laws (Spending Limits): Tom

Report: This regards the restrictive wording on paying things that are over budget. Currently our by-laws give the Treasurer absolute veto power which I would like to change. I am talking about over-budget items that need approval by the Board. We need some flexibility, i.e., if we have in the budget \$2,000 for insurance and it is \$2,010, that is \$10 over the budget and then we must get the entire Board to vote on it. My initial thoughts are that if it over-budget by 10% or less then maybe a couple of officers could approve it and then be able to go ahead with the item. If it is more than that then we go to the Board for a vote.

Discussion:

Kurt would suggest replacing 'approval' with 'in consultation with' the Treasurer so that the Treasurer stays involved. The Treasurer is the one who looks at every line of a contract, not the other members of the Board. This dilemma might lead to unbudgeted items.

ACTION ITEM: The Finance Committee should examine our spending limits policies, in conjunction with the by-laws, the statement of the Treasurer's responsibilities (where the word 'approval' does not appear), and make a recommendation to the Board.

Fundraising Chair:

Report: Tom: I think we should consider a Fundraising Chair; somebody who is outgoing and can put together a list of important donors to WFO, i.e., Graham Chisolm, Lee Yawkey, other important people to WFO, and keep in contact with them month by month, by telling them what is going on, what is coming down the pipe, what the Publications Committee is working on, and keeping the relationships going. There is a real need for this in our organization.

DISCUSSION: This is what Ken has proposed. If it needs to be a committee, the chair can enlist help. We should keep it very simple at first. The donor decides which fund the money is for. Ask how much first and then ask 'how do you want to earmark it.'

- It is a great idea if the right person is willing to do it. It is a tremendous responsibility.
- It is crucial to have a key list of names so if a question comes from a potential donor (What do you need, and what for etc.,) you are prepared. Also, when you are asking, have the needs projected with the ask.
- It must be a Board member, as they have to speak for the Board.
- The chair of this committee is to a large extent a job with coordination and planning. A person who is thinking ahead. We need to be tailoring our fundraising to the projects that we are doing. We can't just keep going to the membership every 2-4 years and have a general fundraising like we did last year. People who are interested in the project are more likely to give than if you ask the membership as a whole.
- In addition to pursuing individuals or organizations, we should consider things like where do people leave their money when they pass on, i.e., wills? There should be a pathway of communications for something like this. This is a whole other level of involvement.
- A few years ago, when Robbie Fischer was Treasurer, she argued against endowment. Robbie felt that it was too hard for the accounting concept at that point and that we didn't have a great deal of money. We are in a different position now.
- Maybe we should take 'baby steps' right now by doing things like designating a Fundraising Chair who starts doing fundraising and starts developing processes. Things like endowments are a very complicated business and they typically need the involvement of lawyers.
- There already is a small group of people who have expressed their interest, by becoming Patrons. Should they not be involved in this sort of thing, with an eye to long-term interest?
- If we start getting into this, we should think about getting a lawyer on the Board. Hopefully this is volunteered. Also, Jon would like to have recorded in the minutes that "The ABA had something called the 'development director.' The ensuing litany of disasters in *hiring* a development director with a six-figure salary were devastating." A cautionary note: when someone from outside the Board is being considered, red flags go up based on the ABA experience.

As per BY-LAWS:

The establishment of other committees: The President of the Board of Directors shall appoint chairpersons of committees as seems appropriate for the activities of the society. The terms of these chairpersons begin as soon as appointed and continue as determined by the Board of Directors.

Ken moves that the Board approve the establishment of a Fundraising Committee, Chair to be selected by the President, and that that Committee is charged with developing plans for both short-term and long-term fundraising and to think about long-term issues related to endowment, seconded by Homer, and passed unanimously.

Life Memberships:

The Finance Committee recommends that as of January 1, 2019, we will increase the Life Membership to \$800 which can be made in two \$400 annual payments with the benefits beginning upon first payment. The benefits, besides being philanthropic, are early registration for field trips and conferences. Current Life Members will be grandfathered in.

Ken moves that we adopt the recommendation of the Finance Committee with respect to Life Membership, seconded by Steve and passed unanimously.

1:48pm

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE:

Tom congratulates Ken Able, Dave Shuford, Catherine Waters, and the Publications Committee, all of whom worked so very hard to get *Trends and Traditions: Avifaunal change in western North America (T&T)* and *The Biology of a Desert Apparition: LeConte's Thrasher (Toxostoma lecontei) (LT)* out. Although there were long hard battles fought to get the publications out, it is finally won.

Report: Ken: We handed out the informational Publications Committee report. There are no decision items that have to be made or voted on. Initially Allen Press used thin text paper for the covers but they were extraordinarily accommodating about it. They did an overnight press run and the books will arrive here by tomorrow afternoon. Allen Press has been a real pleasure to work with throughout. They are shipping only 30 books of the entire order to the conference here in Ventura. Kurt will take orders here or people can order online.

Note: A search is underway to replace Lauren Harter (per her request) as our Book Review Editor. Phil is reviewing candidates and he will let us know when somebody has been selected.

Possible future projects: Report: Ken: In addition to the Paul Lehman's book on Gambell and St. Lawrence Island which is currently under review, we are also on the verge of receiving Tom and Jo Heindel's manuscript on Inyo County, which has been in progress for a long time.

Note: Ken: We have an active web page from which you can order books thanks to efforts by Cat, Tim Brittain and Suzanne. It cost us very little as Tim considered it part the regular work that he does for us on retainer. Cat did it for nothing as usual, but it was not easy to do. It will be there as long as we have our website and we are willing to meet the Paypal structure.

e-books: Report: Ken: As our two publications were being processed by Allen Press, they were formatted for e-book sales. We will have to sell the books ourselves on the website. We had decided that we would wait a year after hard copy publication before we put the downloadable e-book up for sale on the website. e-book sales and hard copy sales don't directly compete with one another.

ACTION ITEM: Ken is going to ask the Publications Committee to take another look at how long we should wait before we start selling e-books on the website and give a recommendation to the Board.

Discussion: Dave S.: It is a mistake to wait otherwise you are going to reduce your sales overall because the vast majority of sales will come in the first year.

Trends and Traditions: Avifaunal change in western North America (T&T):

Report: Dave S.: We ran into an amazing series of issues that caused delays. Under the circumstances we did the best we could. I would also like to emphasize that this was a group effort. It was a huge effort by the other two editors, Robert Gill and Colleen Handel; Phil did the bulk of copyediting; Dan Gibson copyedited all literature cited for the 25 papers; Ken Able shepherded this whole thing; Cat Waters did a great deal of fundraising and worked very seamlessly with Allen Press to make it happen; and Tim Brittain has been indispensable. I think all these people deserve much credit. If you think it is important to be doing what you are doing and getting out publications, I think you should try to figure out what went wrong and why undesirable things happened, and can you ameliorate this the next time through to ensure that you can keep doing these things. In terms of Jon's talking about where we went a little long in letting people to continue to submitting publications, these were so far in advance that we weren't going to cut them off. None of this slowed down the overall process. There were other things that needed to happen, i.e., copyediting.

Discussion: Tom: There are some issues with the cost estimates for publication for (*T&T*) and why they were off. The expenses were looked at many years ago. Also, dealing with 29 authors has its inherent problems.

- The Publications Committee should do an After Action Report (AAR) on the book. The surest way ensuring that the same mistakes are not made in the future is to go through the whole process mentally and identify mistakes and things that worked well so that there is a guide for future publications that is more tangible than peoples' individual memories.
- The project was incredibly ambitious from the start, but it is also one of the best things WFO has done. It was worth it despite some of the problems.
- These are the first books that we published since *Rare Birds of California (RBC)* and the publication world has changed dramatically since that time. It is a whole different game and a learning curve that we had to adapt to figure out how to deal with digital publication. Everything had to be relearned from scratch. Remember, that for the most part, all of this work was done by volunteers. Tim Brittain is extraordinarily good at what he does. He is a terrific resource. If you run into him, praise him because he is a real resource for WFO.
- We already have done one other multi-author project that didn't get quite the criticism that this project did, and that is the *Bird Species of Special Concern (BSC)*. It is the same size as this volume and there are species accounts by innumerable authors. We have done two multi-authored publications, so it is possible to do.

NOTE: Suzanne: There are two items regarding our current two publications that need approval by the Board. In the LeConte's Thrasher (*LT*) book there was a significant change in the financial position which did not go out for approval which is fine, but let it be known that the final budget was significantly changed by the reduced print run. The original order of 500 was reduced to 300.

- There are two other overruns for (*T&T*) that do need the Board approval. One is that the editing was budgeted at \$7,000 and the invoices total \$8,000. Tim Brittain's bill that came in for graphics editing, design layout, etc. was budgeted at \$5,000 and came in at \$5,700. The Treasurer needs the Board to approve the two overruns of \$1,000 and \$700.

Motion: Homer moves that the Board approve the \$1,000 overrun for editing and the \$700 overrun for graphics editing, etc., for (T&T), seconded by Kimball and passed unanimously.

The pricing is \$32.00 for the *LeConte's Thrasher (LT)* book.

Motion: Larry moves that we charge \$32.00 (including shipping and handling) for the LeConte's Thrasher(LT) book, seconded by Kimball, and passed unanimously.

The pricing for the *Trends and Traditions (T&T)* book is \$58.00.

Motion: Jon D. moves that we charge \$58.00 (including shipping and handling) for the (T&T) book, seconded by Homer, and passed unanimously.

Discussion: These prices are what we are charging at the Conference. If ordered through Allen Press, the price should be about the same. We will announce these books here at the conference.

Western Birds (WB) (Phil)

We have 5 manuscripts currently in review, the 3 have been returned to the author for revision, one manuscript accepted for 49(4) is not yet set for typesetting and then we have 3 manuscripts for 49(4) that are already set for typesetting, so that will get us through 49(4). I want to emphasize once again that we have had a dip in our submission rate this last year as is reflected in the chart I have handed out. Recently, in 2017 we had 37 submissions; this year so far we have had only 18 (that is 22 pro-rated through the end of the year).

ACTION ITEM: Please talk to your colleagues who are doing interesting ornithology and encourage them to contribute. The organization raises a lot of money and we want to spend it on our core activity and we need to have the raw material.

3:50pm

CONFERENCE COMMITTED:

Albuquerque, NM, August 21, - 25th, 2019 (Kurt)

Next year the conference will be in Albuquerque, NM, August 21, - 25th, 2019 at the Crowne Plaza where the two interstates come together. It is close to the University, and fairly close to the airport (about a \$10 Uber ride). I went out there this summer to check everything out and started getting field trips going, picking hotels, and looking for keynote speaker potentials. I met with Dave Krueper, Andy Johnson, and Matt Baumann. Matt has agreed to help with the science sessions and help get papers for that. We will have a reception at the museum on Thursday night. The hotel will provide free shuttles to the reception at the museum. There are birding opportunities at the Rio Grande Nature Center just down the road. We will have a post-conference fundraising field trip Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday led by Dave Krueper and Jon D. The first rendition of the contract should be coming to me very soon, after which can start sorting out details. We are hoping to have 12 vans for the field trips. Matt Baumann has agreed to be point person to organize the leaders. I will be helping him and Andy. Lisa Walray, a local Albuquerque artist, will do art for the T-shirt. I welcome any involvement.

- When we go to the museum, we will be able to see the permanent dedication plaque to our first Swarth Award recipient, Bob Dickerman.

Regonline

Report: Diane: To warn you ahead of time, after the Albuquerque conference, we will be out of our contract with Regonline and they are going to raise their price to more than double. It can go up from \$4 to \$6 per person. The percentage on the credit card will go up and they will have a fee of about \$3,000 to \$6,000 which they have not announced yet. It will be significant and our contract expires May 30, 2020. We start registering people in June. We do not want to be on the cusp with having half of one contract and half of another. We do not want to lose the contract if we want to stick with them. Then everything that is archived gets trashed. We must decide on how we want to handle this.

ACTION ITEM: I am going to make up a spread sheet to show you how Regonline is changing. It should be available at the next Board meeting although I will not be on the Board then.

ACTION ITEM: Diane needs to train someone to do the Regonline. Also, there is so much printing that has to be done that goes into every packet. All the signage and everything else fell on me this year, but we need someone for next year.

Tom: Diane has worked very very hard on this conference.

Conference 2020 possibilities:

Discussion: If we follow tradition, the next conference is going to be in northern California. We made good money in Fortuna. Another advantage to Fortuna is Rob Fowler, in terms of organizing all the field trips, is a great person to work with. In Petaluma there were issues with the hotel. What about Klamath Falls? It would be similar to Fortuna, in that people would have to drive some ways to get there since there is no near-by airport. Central Valley is hot if it is in the fall. What about Bodega Bay with a pelagic (a known moneymaker) or maybe Monterey. How about Reno, NV?

- Is it too soon to pick somebody to be the conference chair for the 2020 conference? Do you have one for the 2019 conference? It might be Kurt. To emphasize Tom's point: You want a competent conference chair and it must be somebody on the Board.

4:20pm

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE:

Report: Homer: I will try to do the .pdf with all the scholars this evening so we have a name recognition with the recipients. We are going to have the get together for all the recipients. We have two scholars from Alaska. Wendy Beers and Lena Hayashi both have been working very hard to facilitate things for the scholars.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Jon D.: We publish lots of rarities reports in **WB** where page charges are paid by some and not by others. I would like a general policy that we would expect at least 50% payment for page charges that cost to publish these reports. There should be some wiggle room. The expectation is that the committee will cough up the 50%. Whether we adopt that now or wait for next Board Conference teleconference call after the next Publications Committee meeting is left up for discussion but I am raising the issue now. I think having a general policy is helpful. We want to publish Committee reports that make payments of at least 50% of the page charges. Currently we just hope to get money. We just need to have a firmer hand.

Dan: There is a distinction between a committee and a report. One or more people representing a committee is the distinction you were mentioning, not just anyone who is impoverished and is submitting a paper.

Recognizing our outgoing President and directors:

Presentation of artwork by Jonathan Alderfer to Tom Blackman, the outgoing president, for his exemplary tenure as our Board President.

We have three people rotating off the Board, Dave Shuford, Larry Modesitt, and Diane Rose.

Announcing new officers:

The Board welcomes new Board members: Matt Baumann, Bryce Robinson, Chris Swarth, and the continuation of Homer Hansen and the return of Dan Gibson. Congratulations to the new Board members.

4:45pm

Motion: John Harris moves to adjourn, seconded by Homer Hansen and passed unanimously.