

**Western Field Ornithologists  
Board of Directors  
Videoconference  
Wednesday, September 2, 2020 1-4pm PST  
(continued coronavirus pandemic)**

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

**Board Members present:** Jonathan L. Dunn, *President*; Kurt M. Leuschner, *Past President*; John H. Harris, *Vice President.*; Suzanne M. Carota, *Treasurer/Membership Sec'y.*; Liga L. Auzins-Wurster, *Recording Secretary*; Matthew J. Baumann, Wendy L. Beers, Kimball L. Garrett, Susan S. Gilliland, Homer M. Hansen, Karen A. Havlena, Andrew Mauro, Kristie Nelson, Edward R. Pandolfino, Bryce W. Robinson, Diane E. Rose, Christopher W. Swarth.

**Guests:** Robert E. Gill, Jr. Editor, Special Publications & Monographs, Thomas O. Blackman, Past Financial Committee Chair, Philip Unitt, *Editor, Western Birds (WB).*

**MINUTES**

**1:00pm**      **Discussion:** Perspectives on various video conferencing and transcription services reviewed. Security issues were examined. The Board is using Zoom video conferencing for the first time.

Meeting called to order, welcome and roll.

**Motion: Minutes with corrections from May 21, 2020 accepted unanimously via motion to approve by Ed and seconded by Ken.**

**1:23pm**      **FINANCE:**

**Treasurer's Report: 2019 Budget:** Our cash balance is \$368,000. There is \$149,000 in the Publications Fund, \$63,000 of which is in the Scholarship Fund. In terms of cash for the 3 CDs that matured in July and August, with Kurt's and John Harris's approval, we found a CD at 0.7% for two years and put \$100,000 in there. We also transferred \$105,000 to our existing money market account at Capital One. Net income is a loss of \$21,000 consisting of \$14,000 of general operating expenses, \$26,000 for 3 issues of **WB**, and \$19,000 of membership income as well as other small amounts. If you look at the Statement of Activity, there are more details. I looked at the next 4 months to see where we might be at the end of the year, and I think we are going to end up with a \$30,000, plus or minus \$5,000 loss for the year. For the rest of the year we have some big things in the budget: another issue of **WB**, the Financial Review and website development. We didn't know about covid when we made this budget. That's our first loss since 2009 because we have no trips and no conference. The only thing we have to consider, is the publication of the *Inyo County* book which is approximately \$25,000 and would be over our \$30,000 loss figure. So far this year we have about \$5,000 in donations. We will not reach our average of \$25,000. Our donations in past years are from the silent auction and from folks in Montana, as well as Dave Shuford's Birdathon contribution. Those sources and Audubon chapters have dried up basically.

Jon: Without our donor trips and conferences, would you advise in increasing membership fees, even though we might lose more members as a result?

Suzanne: Yes. We are losing members by not having a conference or trips. It's a good idea if in a donor letter we say we are hurting from a donation standpoint and that we are considering all sorts of options including raising membership dues at some point.

Kimball: Other organizations are doing covid fundraising. It wouldn't look bad at all if we do the same thing and the year-end letter will help to address that.

Jon: We have \$159,000 unrestricted funds. The rest is in student programs and publications. So at a rate of \$30,000 loss per year for 5 years, if covid were to go on, we would have about 5 years' operating expenses before we go bankrupt.

Ed: Those funds are not really restricted. They are Board directed funds..

1:50pm

## **PUBLICATIONS:**

**Review:** Of the *Thrasher* book we printed 300 and we have 183 left. We sold 10 since the beginning of January. The *Trends and Tradition* book we printed 200 and have 49 left. We only sold 4 this year. It's a good thing that we postponed reprinting. The *Gambell* book we did a reprint of 300. We have 305 left. We sold 87 this year. In all, sales have been pretty good this year even though they have slowed in the last months. We have sold 4 e-books this year for a total of 13. We get about \$10 per book in royalties. I looked at the income statements of each of the books. All the money comes out of the Pubs Fund. The *Thrasher* book is an \$11,000 loss. *Trends and Traditions* is about a \$5,000 loss. That's the only publication that came in better than budget. We had good sales and good donations. The *Gambell* book is a \$9,000 loss which is worse than budget, but it is probably due to the reprint. The Heindel's book on *Inyo County* will be a big decision for next year's budget.

**Update:** Ken: The *Inyo County* book's status remains the same, it's moving along very, very slowly. I have no idea when the final manuscript is going to be in hand. At that point there is still a lot of copyediting and revisions. The manuscript will not come to me this year (2020) and I can't make any promises about 2021.

Jon: I have so far reviewed 30-40% of the manuscript – all the accounts. In yesterday's e-mail I received a long analysis of my comments with rebuttal and acceptance. Tom's health has been better in the last few weeks and they are back to being fully engaged. I surmise soon I will receive another slug of accounts to review. I advised that the children, Kelly and Matt, get involved.

Suzanne: It may be premature about the *Inyo County* book, but given our financial situation, are we going to publish the book next year if it's ready?

Jon: It's up to the Board and the Publications Committee. Maybe more fundraising will be involved. I would hope that if someone made a significant donation to this book project, that the money would be used only for that.

Suzanne: As a whole we try to stay away from directed funds and that's why we try to have people donate to the Publications Fund which is a Board directed fund.

**Membership: Report:** Suzanne: We are down to 984 members, 10 Patrons, and 237 Life Members and 17 Foreign. In 2020 we have a net loss of about 50 members. 130 never renewed, but 75 joined, which gives us a net loss about 50. Our highest was about 1,200 total members in 2015. So we are on the same trajectory that we have been on for the last 5 years.

**Other:** Suzanne: In the December budget process, I would like to set a date in December so we can set up the budget properly for 2021. I will build the schedule 4-6 weeks prior to that date regarding how to get the budget put together in time for that meeting.

Kurt: I want to thank Tom Blackman for all his hard work over the last 2 years with the Finance Committee culminating in this Review. It's a real big achievement.

2:00pm

**Finance Committee Report:** Tom: Thank you for those comments. Liga sent out the Report from Matt Howard yesterday and also a cover letter. I highlighted Matt's statement about Suzanne not providing me any toss up errors and the great work that Suzanne did in putting this together.

The Report is in 3 sections. The first section is the 990 and it goes over each of the questions in the 990. There were 6 ambiguous questions. Matt, a CPA, had expertise in that. It's important because the 990 goes to the IRS who can challenge our non-profit status. The second section concerns the Financial Statements. There weren't any comments on that. Matt was happy in seeing all those statements. The third section regarding internal controls required discussion which was brought about by COSO who is the Committee On Sponsored Organizations which is an offshoot of the division of FASB laws and procedures. This third section concerns having someone independent of the Treasurer that can resolve bank accounts and do accounting to respond to the lack of segregation of services. What we have now is a Finance Chair only. That's our dilemma that we need to address. How comfortable are we with the controls that we can put into place and is there anything we can do to make it as easy and secure as possible?

**Action Item:** Find a procedure that addresses our lack of segregation of services.

Ed: Although I think it is important to get some Board discussion, I prefer to have the Finance Committee come back with recommendations on each these before we make decisions.

Tom: I will stay on to finish this task out. We just got this report, so we didn't have much time to come up with recommendations.

Jon: My comment to Suzanne would be, "Do you have a way of anyone cross checking you, so you are not creating dummy accounts?"

Suzanne: It's really pretty difficult to monitor unless you have one person opening the checks and recording them and then the other person depositing them. I do both things.

Jon: Would you consider sending the Suzanne's reconciliations to the whole Finance Committee?

Tom: I think it's workable if you keep the Finance Committee small. My committee was 3 other people. I wouldn't object to sending the reconciliations to the whole Finance Committee

**Action Item:** Tom will stay on and finish this task and report at the next Board meeting on October 21<sup>st</sup> with some recommendations. With Suzanne, Tom will come up with the best possible solutions for risk versus reward.

Tom: Over all we have to be very happy with this review and understand what we have done and look at this critically. It is not an audit which would have cost \$10,000 to \$20,000. This is a good check on what we have been doing and a positive indication that we are headed in the right direction. I am very comfortable with what we found out and the results we got here.

**Action Item:** Tom: 1) How often should we do this review and 2) would you recommend using Matt again?

2:35pm

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Report:** Kurt: Diane reminded us that after the Reno Conference we need to have somebody in place to handle C-vent and to coordinate all the tasks associated with that. We talked about paying somebody to do such a task so that we don't have to worry about a volunteer stepping up. I have been talking to Jan Hajj. She is working for San Diego Audubon and she has time to work for us in the future on an hourly basis. She has the C-vent Certification. She is also skilled in field trip organization as she worked for a travel agency before this. She may be the perfect person for us. She is a member and she is already volunteering for us. 2021 is going to be a strange year but maybe we can transition her in slowly working with Diane and use her as a volunteer. The way she charges San Diego Audubon is they set aside some money, she bills them as she uses them, not to exceed the amount set aside for her. So far she hasn't reached that amount with them. In the long run, after 2021, this could cost us anywhere from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year. Today, I would like to consider and set aside \$3,000 in the 2021 budget for such a purpose in case we engage in a contract with Jan. This need not be a motion. This would solve 2 issues. We would have somebody to coordinate any field trips and to do the conferences. Jan is looking forward to coordinating field trips, do registration and get all the packets filled, do merchandise, and stay at the event.

**Discussion:** Chris: Would we consider raising the conference fee to try to cover this new cost?

Kurt: I don't know if that is needed. If our main sources of income are our conferences and fundraising trips, and we have somebody who we are paying to really coordinate those things, it's going help bring in the money that we need. Maybe we can do more than what we have done in the past. I am trying to give Diane a little bit of ease in her mind that we have someone who would work with her, even on a volunteer basis in the meantime.

Tom: Our model for the conference is a modest registration fee and low field trip fees. If you look at other festivals they have low registration fees but high field trip fees. For example, if we hired Jan at \$10,000 and we got 300 attendees that would be \$33 per person. If you have to increase trip fees or increase registration, that's an issue that the Finance Committee has to team up with whoever is running the conference.

Kurt: Although \$10,000 is at the high end of the range, it wouldn't necessarily be that much. Plus, we are getting somebody to coordinate trips which is something Jon and others have been asking for years. If we just add one more big trip a year that can be thousands of dollars right there. We would have a coordinator for conference field trips and the fundraising field trips. There would still be an army of volunteers working for the conference. If she works with Diane a little bit this year then we might have a better idea of how much time she would need to do the conference the following year.

Diane: I have already done the conference last year for this year. What I will be showing her are all the registration types and all the complications of the discounts and the e-mails that she has to send out automatically. I also have the Certificate from C-vent.

Kurt: We should keep this on the agenda and in the meantime try to get Jen engaged with Diane as we get closer to Reno. From a budgetary standpoint, we might want to consider setting aside money for Jen, maybe up to \$3,000 to get us through 2021.

**Action Item:** Ed: Since I am on the meetings Committee, I would like to talk to Jen about this and persuade her to do this on her own time without adding extra money to the budget. I don't think there would be that much effort involved for her to just look at what we are doing, especially if she is planning to come to the conference anyway.

Kurt: I was thinking of the transition beyond Reno, i.e., if we are going to Salt Lake City after Reno, the planning for that begins in 2021 not *after* Reno. If Diane is not doing that, it would be nice to have somebody even if we are paying them to get that going. By the way, Jen is from Salt Lake City and she's got numerous connections there as Bryce can attest. She is on our Meetings Committee.

**Action Item:** Diane and Ed will set up a plan for Jen's entry into preparing and coordinating conferences.

**Action Item:** There needs to be some sort of understanding that if there is no conference next year, that we are not liable for \$1,000's of dollars to give to Jan for no event.

Kurt: That will be set up, and again it would be more like she would bill us for time.

**Action Item:** The Finance Committee along with Suzanne will negotiate the contract with Jen.

**Action Item:** Diane: Jen's not going to do much until the next year. Then I will still do it that year if we don't go anywhere.

**Action item:** Committee Chairs: Make sure all committee members maintain their membership.

2:50pm

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

### **Publications:**

**WB: Report:** Phil: We have five articles plus two book reviews currently accepted for 51(4). Three articles are already typeset, one article plus two book reviews currently are with Tim Brittain for typesetting, one article is ready to go today. The author of one accepted manuscript to whom the copy editing was sent on 17 May has responded so this article will be published in 51(4) as well. Publication of **WB** 51(4) is scheduled for the end of October. We are awaiting revisions of 5 manuscripts of which the reviews were sent to authors earlier this year. Seven manuscripts received since 3 July are still in review. Our rate of submissions is holding steady. So far in 2020 we have received 26 manuscripts. This total equals the number received by 1 September in 2017 and 2013, and of the preceding eight years, is exceeded only by 32 in 2014. We are keeping steady in 2020 but please encourage your colleagues to submit to **WB**. I corresponded with Jay Withgott giving him some guidance for the forthcoming Oregon Bird Records Committee back in July, but I have not received a manuscript as yet. Cat Waters and I continue to discuss creative ideas for the Book Reviews. One good one that she had to expand beyond the concept of books, was the series of articles, "The Hungry Bird" by Dave Leatherman, published in **Colorado Birds**. We are going to try that. In our next issue of the two book reviews, one will be by Clay Anderson of Drew Lanham's book, "**The Home Place**." Review of Nevada Atlas by Dave Shuford will be in issue 52(1).

Kurt: All the reviews should go to Phil, and he will decide if there are any for the Newsletter and then he can send them off to Chris, the editor of the Newsletter.

**Action Item:** If the publisher does not provide a free copy for book reviewing, WFO will pay those expenses out of the Publications fund or the general fund. It would be less than \$100 per year.

**Action Item:** Phil will report on the recruitment of possible book reviewers for **WB**.

### **Meetings:**

**Reno 2021: Update:** Ed: We have almost all trip leaders agreeing to lead their trips for us in Reno 2021. I am assuming that all the people from WFO, i.e., Jon and Diane in particular, are going to continue their roles that they agreed to fill. We have already made a commitment because we have signed a contract for Reno. If we can't have the conference we would have to go through the same thing and see if we could extend the contract. I assume Diane will probably be opening registration for this in May (3 months ahead). I am beginning to feel pretty comfortable that there will be a vaccine and people would feel pretty comfortable in signing up for the conference by May. If in February, it looks like that will not happen, we need to look at Plan B. So, don't worry now, but do so in January or February.

**Meeting 2022:** Ed: Given that we have taken a financial loss this year and we may have some issues next year as well, I am going to suggest that we have a Southern California meeting in 2022. Those meetings get the largest attendance and therefore the highest profit. They are among the easiest to arrange because we have so many venues and so many field trip options. Perhaps we could go to the desert. Maybe push the out-of-state meeting another year as it takes extra planning and it not going to be financially rewarding.

**Student Programs: Report:** Homer: The students have really come forth and have a monthly Zoom meeting. Jon and Kimball participated in the first presentation. There is a meeting coming up this Friday where we have 7 students signed up. I believe we are going to be posting some of the presentations on the new website. Teodalina gave a presentation last month.

The other thing that is happening this month with the Diversity and Inclusivity Subcommittee (D&I) is the recognition that we trying to diversify and trying to have underrepresented groups represented. The youth is an important area to work with. Along those lines, the Student Programs Committee has put together some guidelines which have gone through review and one round of comments and the D&I Committee also commented. Most everybody on the Board has provided some feedback on it. I have sent something out, just before this meeting, to the Board which contains a draft motion for the D&I to adopt. The key components are, i.e., outreach to interested youths, and to be supportive of increased diversity. As to how we would implement that, there are really 3 propositions: 1) the recognition that that demographic has less financial opportunity. What we are proposing is to insert on the website in the Student Programs page where it says, 'Join Now,' students with financial hardship may e-mail us, plus the free introductory membership and allow for the students to participate, i.e., Zoom meetings. 2) Reach out to the local Audubon Societies who often have programs that are already reaching out or they might have individuals who might have an interest in ornithology, and we could focus our attention towards those people. 3) That within our existing 8 scholarships applicants, we would set aside one for an underrepresented group and hopefully provide the opportunity to attend a conference. If we can find a family that doesn't have all the financial resources to make it from, i.e., L.A. to San Diego, perhaps we can provide up to \$500 as needed and requested, for things like gas money.

Kurt: Homer will you be budgeting about \$100 per year for anybody who might request a free membership? And then you would be budgeting another \$500 if needed for that 8<sup>th</sup> scholarship recipient to help bring their parents to the conference if necessary. If nobody was to choose that 8<sup>th</sup> Scholarship then it would just be available to anybody. Financially it sounds like in the worst case scenario, you are looking at \$600 per year in the budget for the Student Programs Committee.

**Action Item:** Consider making the language consistent with 'underrepresented' and other terms that were used in the D&I Subcommittee.

Homer: The financial hardship is not for the scholarship to the conference. It is for the Student Programs web page where it applies to someone who could not afford the membership fee. The \$500 is for travel that is specific to an applicant that meets the definition of what we are trying to do to increase diversity. First is to have an underrepresented applicant who is interested and who we also feel would fall into our criteria too. It's more a need based thing where they say that they would love to come but I can't nor can my parents afford it.

Kurt: The Student Programs Committee would be the deciding entity for that. If the Student Programs Committee wants to designate 2-3 people to be in charge of that, that's fine too, but the committee should look at these applicants and have a chance to weigh in. We will probably vote on this at the next meeting.

**Action Item:** In October meeting vote on \$500 possible funding for needy students.

Jon: I refuse to believe that \$10 is a hurdle. The Board voted about 5 years ago to request the \$10 fee as a way of showing sincere interest with WFO as something that was important. I guess if there was a detailed letter explaining the financial hardship that could be considered, but just waiving that routinely, I am not sure I agree. If we gave a minority scholarship, then there's the hotel, what to do with the parents, the costs of gas, travel, etc. Even though it would amount to a lot more money, the only thing we would ask is in a procedural way to pay that after the event with the presentation of receipts that we reimburse so there is a paper trail of what the expenses are. Receipts are presented to Suzanne and then they are reimbursed.

Homer: I would like to go back to the \$10 student membership. This is not across the board. It is only for those students in need and one of the goals here is for people who might be browsing around in the new website, they see some of the Zoom meeting contents and see that the white-crowned sparrow presentation was fantastic therefore they would like to join, 'Oh, it's \$10,' and walk away. WFO has lost an opportunity. It's hard to imagine someone who is 12 years old, and whose Mom is working 3 jobs, and you have a genuine interest as a kid and that window is there, and then it's gone. We can't conceptualize that. We know how this sparks the students.

**Action Item:** Remind all student members to submit a copy of their student ID.

3:30pm

#### **OUTREACH AND FUNDRAISING:**

**Website: Report: Bryce:** The website is ready to go live in the next few days. We will let everyone know when it does. Todd's working with Tim right now, making sure that Tim can take care of everything from now on.

**Action item:** Bryce will get in touch with Susan Gilliland for updates on the student pages and check with Dan Gibson about getting the Index for **WB** on the website.

**Action Item:** Liga will send the updated WFO Board meeting times to Tim.

**Action Item:** Bryce will ask Todd to put a header that says the next Board meetings and then the date on the page where all the Board meetings are stored.

Bryce: There are two types of things that people will be sending in to be put on the website. Direction on how to change things and then suggestions how to update things. Updating is great and that can all go to Tim, but for adding certain things, I think it should be discussed with the Board perhaps and also routed through someone who can filter it for Tim, so that we are not just throwing stuff at Tim with what anyone wants on the website and Tim has to find a place for it. I've seen this new addition get taken down on the following day. You can send me stuff, but I think there should be a discussion with the Board when it comes to adding something new to the website.

**Action Item:** Bryce and Chris will work on a process on how to add new information to the website. They will share with the Board as issues come up, or if you have questions you can direct them to Bryce or Chris.

**Newsletter: Report:** (Chris): The Newsletter is a free flowing project where we have a pretty wide latitude as to what goes into it. For the next Newsletter we have some major articles, a big one on taxonomy and systematics by Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett, original bird highlights, and Steve Howell has written a very nice essay. We have bios from Board members. Wendy, Homer and Liga letting the membership know who you are and how you got involved. There are a bunch of news announcements, etc. We have input from 3 students, Alex Cho, Lara Tseng, Jake Xia, Each Newsletter has had 3 students. You should all have that e-mail I sent yesterday as to the contents. The deadline is the 5<sup>th</sup> of September and it will take at least 5 days to get it all together and looking good, so hopefully by the 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> we will send it out.

**Action Item:** Chris: We will put our year-end appeal letter in the November/December Newsletter.

**Diversity and Inclusivity Subcommittee(D&I):** Chris: The Subcommittee, which has been operating for about 3 months now with 10 members, has met online, sent e-mails, and made phone calls. We had a conference call last week. One of the things we are hoping to do, is institute a new free membership for anyone in an underrepresented group. We have talked about the details on that and are trying to get some more information. We were hoping to have a vote today at this Board meeting, but we have decided to postpone this until the next Board meeting so that everybody has a chance to weigh in with any new information or comments, etc. So far, that is the only concrete action that we have taken to move the ball forward as a way to increase diversity. We have also talked about initiating a third graduate student scholarship that would fall under John Harris's purview and that would be one that specifically targets somebody who is either black, Latin, or Native American, but that is for a future discussion as it would involve a substantial outlay of funds. What we are talking about right now is simply a free membership. We would like to come back to the Board at the October meeting with a motion that we would ask you to vote on. You already have an e-mail from me, so you can see the general thinking on this. If you have any comments please contact me or anybody else who is on the Subcommittee. Also, I am pleased that Clay Anderson wrote the book review that is going to come out in *WB*. I talked with Clay about his ideas on how we could have some diversity. His answer was that it's not going to be easy especially with blacks. Clearly there aren't many, especially those who might want to take a step up and join WFO. While I think it is important to do whatever we can, even though I don't think that we will be inundated with a lot of new members. All I would say to the Board is, take a look at that

statement that is on the website. We made that 2-3 months ago and we are simply trying to fulfill that mission.

Jon: As a sideline of the students with John Harris's Graduate Research Grant Subcommittee, rather than add a scholarship right now, given the financial issues, is it possible that next year, one of the 2 slots we currently have could be allocated to a minority. At least that should be within the realm of considerations. So you are not adding one.

**Other:** Steve: CBRC wanted to be able to make corrections to Rare Birds online and wanted to update it and add something that is online and keep it up to date rather than have something that is terribly obsolete. It will not be covered now because, it was just brought up yesterday. After coordinating with Ken Able, it's something I will bring up with Kimball, and go from there.

**Action Item:** The 'Conflict of Interest Policy' that we were going to work on will be discussed next month.

**Election:** Every Board member has gotten numerous e-mails on the election. We have 5 candidates for 4 positions.

**4:02pm** **Motion to go into Executive Session moved by Ed and seconded by Ken and passed unanimously.**

**Board returns from Executive Session via motion by Ed and seconded by Karen.**

**New Board Announcements:**

Jon announces newly voted in Board members: Andy Mauro, Kristie Nelson, Susan Gilliland and returning member, Wendy Beers. Our new Board members will have mentors from the Board assigned to them.

The next Board Meetings will be October 21, 2020 and December 9, 2020.

**4:23pm** **Kimball moves to adjourn, Karen seconds, and the meeting is unanimously adjourned.**