

Flathead Audubon Society Board of Directors, 11/6/23, FWP Conference Room
Prepared by: Pam Willison, Secretary

Directors Present: Darcy Thomas, Pam Willison, Shannon Donaldson, Bridger Donaldson, Dan Casey, Tom Roberts, Cindy Roberts, Linda Du Lac, Kay Mitchell, Rod Walette, Jake Bramante, Ronda Howell, Jason Garver, Carole Jorgenson

Others in Attendance: Grant Pegram, Dee Baginski, Denny Olson

The meeting was called to order by President Darcy Thomas at 5:35 pm

Minutes (October): Jake offered a minor wording change related to membership. Tom made a motion to approve; Linda seconded; unanimous approval.

Financials: Rod noted that the financials show major increases in revenue related to receiving the funds from the Great Fish fundraiser, which this year generated the largest amount since we began participating. The result is that expenses are covered and a healthy balance remains for expenses during the rest of the fiscal year. Investments are up and down with the market. Pam inquired whether the funds were received from Montana Audubon for the Owen Sowerwine cost-sharing, and Rod confirmed they had been received. Jake made a motion to accept and file the financials; Kay seconded; unanimous approval.

Operations Coordinator: Dee reported that she has been working with Jake on posting material to the FAS website and completing outreach tasks. Related to scheduling group use, she did a walking tour of all areas of Owen Sowerwine with Pam and Denny. She also met with Darcy and Linda Winnie regarding LGL and publicity. Linda Winnie would also like to train Dee to prepare the email version of the newsletter. Pam suggested that everyone training Dee document details of tasks Dee is being trained to do, so that we have the components for a procedure manual for future reference and training.

Lewis Young Memorial Scholarship: Kay reported that Gary Olson, who was organizing this memorial scholarship, told her that the fund is currently active, however Kay was unable to locate it on their website. Kay has reached out to a couple people and is hoping to get details about how to make contributions, so information can be included in the December newsletter.

Issues with Metal in Trees: Kay provided a handout about “tree spiking” and found that the descriptions of the prohibited materials in the law don’t seem to include metal items as small as the 22 short shell casings that would remain after the glyphosate capsule was injected into buckthorn. Jake also pointed out that the law applies to timber, and buckthorn isn’t timber that will be logged. It was felt that the shell casing is not a legal or safety issue that would prevent us from using the EZ-ject lance on buckthorn in Owen Sowerwine. Pam also noted that use of the lance was reviewed and approved by DNRC.

Whitefish Lake Institute: At the BOD meeting last month, Darcy had mentioned making a donation, and Bob Lee had concern about a non-profit giving a donation to another non-profit and wanted to check with Montana Audubon for guidance. He found that the MA Board feels those sorts of donations aren't recommended. Board discussion revealed several examples where we have donated to other non-profits in the past, as have other non-profit organizations. Kay clarified that Great Fish funds cannot be passed through to another organization, and Rod confirmed the money would come from our general fund. Dan made a motion to donate \$100 to Whitefish Lake Institute; Jake seconded; unanimous approval. Darcy will provide a notecard and Rod will generate a check so this can be completed next Monday.

Great Fish: Dee placed a thank you ad in both the Whitefish Pilot and the Bigfork Eagle. The newsletter contained a thank-you last month.

Montana Audubon: Rod confirmed that the annual \$1000 donation to Montana Audubon will be made in November, as it has done of past years.

Committee Reports:

Education: Denny will be doing a presentation for the Native Plant Society, including the use of the Natives Rule video. Arric Bryan, a 5th grade teacher at Somers, is planning to work with Denny having his students do some rudimentary breeding bird surveys in OS, and planning and installing some native plants in a weed-filled area at the school.

Newsletter: The list of items was reviewed and some items clarified.

Programs: There was discussion about whether we are offering an honorarium to speakers, which has been available in the past, but seldom accepted. Rod noted in the past, there was an item included in the budget. In the future, Ronda will mention it when she arranges speakers. Ronda plans to print some flyers about the monthly programs, and place them around the valley.

Field Trips: There are a few upcoming field trips for December, including the Christmas Bird Counts. There was discussion about the regulations for using OS for field trips, and Pam is working on the details about how that will work under the proposed Conservation Easement, and will have that available for BOD review at the December or January meeting.

Conservation: Grant reported that Gael and Carole are tracking the proposed housing development in the Somers area. Grant is working on an article for the PP about window strikes and the Lights Out initiative. An issue related to Bull Trout in Swan Lake is currently on hold.

Membership: Linda is in the last stage of clean-up of membership information related to Great Fish. She will be looking into reactivating membership cards. Jake mentioned the need for a new member packet, and Linda said she has been mailing a newsletter and brochure to new members. Darcy will continue to offer a newsletter to new people at programs.

Junior Birding Club: Linda encouraged FAS to work on getting a “Junior Birder” program started. Shannon reported that she has been looking into the idea. Denny suggests that we work toward starting it next summer when we aren’t doing the Road Scholar programs, and to consider it long-term as our summer activity in place of the Road Scholar programs, provided we can forgo the revenue generated by the Road Scholar programs. Denny, Dee, Linda and Shannon will form an ad hoc committee to work on the club.

Owen Sowerwine: Pam reported that the Conservation Easement and Management Plan went to the legal staff of the 5 land board members today so they will have 6 weeks to review the documents and provide feedback. It will go before the Land Board on 12/18. The DNRC working group will continue working on the Memorandum of Agreement. Flathead Land Trust will hear the results of the Conoco/Phillips grant the end of November. Pam is working on the group use criteria, scheduling procedure, and calendar for OS, and hopes to have something for the BOD in December or January.

Outreach: Jake reported that he has been working with Dee to establish connections with newspapers and that she’s working on getting our items onto community calendars.

Hawk Watch: Dan reported that we’ve only done surveys in November 7 of the past 16 years, and that thanks to Jake, that includes this year. The surveys produced an above average total and above average counts for most of the species. There were 23 contracted surveys, and others were done by volunteers. So, in addition to the contract fees, there should be some expenses for mileage and per diem for volunteers serving as primary, and Dan encourages people to submit for those. Denny noted that he’s still looking for material for the video he is working on, so you can send him photos you took at the survey site. Jake noted that this was the first year that a game camera was used to monitor weather conditions on the ridge.

CBC: Shannon and Bridger are taking over the Kalispell count with support from Dan, Pete Fisher, and Craig Hohenberger. Craig will continue to organize the Bigfork count.

Announcements at meeting/Helping Hands: Darcy will do the announcements and welcomes, and bird sightings. Jake will do Tricky Bird ID.

Bird Trivia: It’s scheduled at Bias Brewing on December 5, from 6-8pm. The trivia organizer from Bias will make the questions.

Jake made a motion to adjourn; Bridger seconded; unanimous approval. The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 pm.