

Flathead Audubon Society Board of Directors, 12/4/23, FWP Conference Room
Prepared by: Pam Willison, Secretary

Directors Present: Darcy Thomas, Pam Willison, Tom Roberts, Cindy Roberts, Linda Du Lac, Kay Mitchell, Rod Walette, Jake Bramante, Ronda Howell, Jason Garver, Bob Lee, Margaret Parodi

Others in Attendance: Dee Baginski, Denny Olson

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

Minutes: There were no additions or changes. Margaret made a motion to approve; Bob Lee seconded; unanimous approval.

Financials: Rod reported on the account balances, expenses, and investments, and noted there was nothing unusual in the check book activity. Rod said that all the invoices for per diem for the primary observers for Hawk Watch were processed. Darcy asked for clarification about the origin of the donation to Montana Audubon. Kay explained that in the past each chapter paid dues based on membership, and that was discontinued. Bob verified that every chapter of Montana Audubon is no longer expected to pay dues based on membership, but they encourage each chapter to provide support (a donation) at the level they can afford. Kay made a motion to accept and file the finance report; Jake seconded; unanimous approval. Rod mentioned a few things coming up at the end of the calendar year: Director and Officer insurance, liability insurance, FVCC contract for Senior Institute, and SAM renewal (in order to have government contracts such as for Hawk Watch).

Bird Trivia: Darcy reminded everyone that bird trivia is tomorrow from 6-8 at Bias Brewing. Darcy purchased the items FAS will provide for the prizes

Operations Coordinator: Dee has been working on a spreadsheet for merchandise, on communications with the papers and calendars, helping prepare the CAR awards, and learning to set up the communication equipment for programs. Jake provided further detail about the process of locating and pricing merchandise. Jason has a friend who has connections for merchandise at a significant discount, and he also provided a recommendation about a company in Columbia Falls that can add the logo and lettering. The Outreach committee is currently sorting through the options.

Mission Statement: Darcy noted that there was significant support for the one sentence statement that Linda wrote and distributed earlier this month. Jake had suggested adding "in northwest Montana". Both the sentence and added ending were supported by the Board. Jake read the final version: "The mission of the Flathead Audubon Society is to conserve birds, wildlife habitat, and ecosystem diversity in northwest Montana through education and conservation programs." Kay made a motion to adopt the new mission statement; Bob seconded; unanimous approval.

Montana Audubon Report: Bob reported that there has been quite a bit of turn over of staff, and most positions have been filled. The 2024 Wings Across the Big Sky Festival will be May 31-June 2. He noted that there is a big push for their Conservation Ranching program to conserve grassland birds, and noted that Montana Audubon is pretty much leading the movement for programs such as this across the United States. The Education Center in Billings continues to be successful, and is looking to partner with FWP for providing programs.

Committee Reports:

Education: Denny reported that it's been a slow month with classroom activity, but he has been working to coordinate activities with Somers. He also worked with Keanu on research, including Keanu's major IB program about the relationship of birds and buckthorn. Denny is also continuing to work on the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch video. Cindy reported that some of the learning kits have been loaned out to teachers, with the owl kit being the most popular. She also noted that the new location is working well and the access and return are more convenient. Denny has also been working with Pam, Will, and Dee to use the new EZ-Ject lance on buckthorn in Owen Sowerwine. He estimates that 400 trees of various diameters have been treated. He mentioned wanting to continue and work through the winter, but Pam spoke up to encourage that we take a more measured approach to using the lance, which has the potential to leave large stands of dead buckthorn. She also mentioned that we really don't know whether doing winter injection are going to be effective, and encouraged not using all the capsules throughout the winter. The discussion continued into noting the need for a comprehensive plan for removal of buckthorn, follow up with regeneration in cleared areas, and rehabilitation or restoration.

Newsletter: The list was reviewed and a few changes made. Darcy will get these notes to Geri.

Outreach: Jake reported that there were a couple technical issues with the zoom link for the last meeting and those have been resolved. Jake explained that he has purchased a backup service for FAS to ensure that we have a satisfactory and adequate way to back-up our website. He's also going through and deleting old, abandoned files to reduce the size of the site to improve backup performance. This may result in a few broken links. He will also be updating the theme of our website so it's technologically current which may change some menus, functionality and overall look/feel of the site. There are also efforts related to the location and structure of information, such as with Owen Sowerwine and Conservation by the various committees.

Programs: Ronda still needs a speaker for February and possibly for January because Montana Audubon has offered to do January, but only via zoom. Several suggestions were offered, and she will try to find an in-person presentation for January. Ronda said she didn't offer Denver Holt an honorarium yet, but wondered if we have a desire to do a donation to the Owl Research Institute instead. Bob suggested that it be handled as an honorarium to defray their costs rather than donation. Rod will process a check and get it to Darcy to send in a thank-you card.

Field Trips: Margaret reported that other than the CBC's, and the solstice field trip, Denny is doing his field trip for tracking and winter sign in Owen Sowerwine sometime the end of January. She is looking for ideas for a winter trip, such as a raptor field trip. She and Darcy also discussed a journaling class/field trip combination or a wildlife photography class/field trip combination. Mike Fanning is planning to reserve the group site for Warbler Weekend at Tally Lake as soon as reservations open. It will be the second weekend in June, and they still need a speaker.

Conservation: No report was available.

Membership: Linda reports that everything is normal. She also thanked Kay for subbing for her at the last program.

Owen Sowerwine: Darcy reported that all of the funding for the Owen Sowerwine Conservation Easement has been raised. Pam reported that we received a grant from Sliters, and it was used to purchase the Ez-Ject lance and glyphosate capsules. Pam will be preparing the yearly invasive/weed report, and starting work on a timeline for needed improvements. The Board packet included the Group Use materials Pam wrote, which will be placed on our website should the proposed CE go into effect. A couple people offered comments or suggestions, and Pam will look at those and update the document before submitting it to DNRC and FLT for review. There will be additional website information that needs to be revised and relocated.

Junior Bird Club: A meeting has been scheduled and there is plenty of enthusiasm. The ad hoc committee has been brainstorming and working on details.

Tally Lake Bench Project: Darcy mentioned that last summer during Warbler Weekend the idea arose that it would be nice to have a bench near Logan Creek where people could rest. Darcy contacted the Forest Service, and they said they have tentative plans to extend the trail into a loop and install several benches. We will stay in contact and see if there is something we can contribute to help. Darcy and Margaret discussed an interim solution of taking some extra chairs to place near the creek.

Christmas Bird Counts: Shannon and Bridger have organized the Kalispell count and will hand out the packets next Monday.

Nominations: Bob reminded that elections are coming up again next May, and encouraged people to start thinking of candidates.

Conservation Speaker Series: They contacted FAS seeking a speaker on the impact of cats on birds. Bob will talk to Dave Manuwal because he did some articles on this subject.

Jake made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Bob seconded; unanimous approval. The meeting was adjourned at 7:38pm.