

Flathead Audubon Society Board of Directors, 09/02/25

Creston Fish Hatchery pavilion

Prepared by Michele Tohtz, Secretary

Directors in Attendance: Darcy Thomas, Rod Walette, Pam Willison, Gael Bissell, Bob Lee, Ronda Howell, Linda du Lac, Margaret Parodi, Jake Bramante, Shannon Donaldson, Bridger Donaldson, Ken Fielder, Michell Tyler

Others in Attendance: Jess Garby, Julie Oswald and Dale Becker

The meeting was called to order by President, Darcy Thomas at 6:00 PM

Darcy welcomed Ken Fielder, Michell Tyler and Dale Becker. We all introduced ourselves.

Minutes: Corrections were made to the May minutes. Shannon made a motion to approve; Bob seconded. Approved unanimously.

Financial Report:

Rod reviewed the financial report. Jake moved to approve; Linda seconded. Approved unanimously.

Old Business: Darcy needs help with the Libby Forest Fair because Jess might not feel well enough to participate. Jess will help if she feels better.

Executive Committee, Board and Ed Coordinator contact list has been updated. Darcy asks that everyone double check the information.

Gael gave a brief history of the Robocker property along the Flathead River. Jess added that Elle does want to conserve the area. An initial field trip will be October 20th, 8 – 11. It's available to Board members only and a friend. Elle wants it low key at first, but she hopes that school groups will be allowed to use the area in the future. Jess and Elle discussed lots of future options for using the property.

New Business:

Pam was nominated to the Board for 1 year as OS Committee Chair. Margaret moved to accept; Gael seconded. Unanimous approval.

Wings 2026 planning is moving along. Margaret is in charge of the field trip committee. Lana Batts will take care of the raffle. Montana Audubon will secure the venue. As of now, the Hilton Garden Inn looks promising.

CAR votes were tallied and announced. Julie and Gael will collaborate on writing an announcement for the Lifetime Achievement Award. Jess will take care of the business award and Pam will write an article about the volunteers.

Rod asked that we don't mention an exact amount when referencing the Evan Clark generous donation. Creating a parking lot for OS is one option for this money.

Rod filled us in on our current leadership and the change he proposes. Rod suggests that the Education Coordinator position becomes an Executive Director in 2 years. This transition can begin slowly. Over

time, an additional person may be hired for the education position. Pam feels that management of OS should also be included in the new duties of an executive director. The Executive Director will also be responsible for grant writing. Linda stressed that strategic planning is necessary. Rod, Pam, Darcy and Michele will discuss this further.

Darcy spoke about using some of the Evan Clark money to give gift certificates monthly at the general meetings for use towards the purchase of Cornell Lab online courses. Also, perhaps some of the money could be used to send someone to National Audubon Leadership Conferences.

Pam would like a committee to investigate our options for an OS parking lot. There is already a designated parcel that is outside the easement. Pam contacted Laura Katzman and Laura felt it would be wiser to purchase a separate parcel. Pam feels Laura might be willing to help with the process, since she knows landowners. Gael and Rod volunteered to help with the committee. Pam, Rod and Gael will meet.

Darcy suggested that a bench might be nice at Reed Slough for people who would like to rest as they birdwatch. Darcy will contact FWP.

PP needs another article about how to deal with injured birds. Gael will write about "Lights Out for Migration". Contents of the October PP were discussed.

Education Coordinator:

Jess shared the Bird Bingo cards that are available at all Flathead County Library branches, and the partnership programming for the upcoming speaker series. Jess spoke about the soon to be developed native plant garden at the Bigfork Library in conjunction with the Rotary Club. Fall Fest will take place at Wayfarers State Park Saturday October 11th with Whitefish Legacy Partners.

Committee Reports:

Great Fish- Total donations so far equal \$12,000; we're behind from last year. Linda pulled info from LGL showing past high donors. Darcy asks that we each contact one or two people. Jess will create a spreadsheet and we can each choose who to call.

History- Linda and the committee continue to do oral interviews. Linda finds it fascinating and very rewarding. She will write a 'history corner' for the PP.

Field Trips- Margaret listed all the October field trips: Sandhill cranes with Denny, Saw-whet Owls with ORI, migrating raptors from Lake McDonald, Smith Lake with Whitefish Legacy Partners, and Michell at Badrock WMA.

Owen Sowerwine- Pam shared that Chatterbox Orchids have been found at Creston Hatchery Ponds, prompting a request for the hatchery not to build a trail around the pond and across the wetland. The hatchery agreed to this.

Pam and Keith released weevils to target spotted knapweed; Pam will monitor. Pam has 4 attractive entrance signs. She and Keith will install them. September 20th is an OS work day.

Programs- Jake is scheduled for September, Sophie Osborn for October. No one yet for November or December. Send ideas to Ronda.

Outreach and Publicity- Jake suggested that we think about a new swag item. Darcy recommended inviting a public official on a field trip. She will contact someone from the City or County Planning Departments.

Conservation: Gael gave an update on two conservation issues. One has been resolved successfully, the other will soon be decided.

Jake made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Bob seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 PM.