

Minutes of the AOS Board Meeting, Fall 2016

Ken Ward , Secretary

The Board of Directors met on Saturday, October 15, 2016, in the Fellowship Hall of the Dauphin Island United Methodist Church. President Anne G. Miller called the meeting to order at 3:08 pm. The spring 2016 minutes were unanimously approved by the Board.

President's Report

A discussion was led by Anne concerning current AOS organizational needs, with three major areas emphasized, all tied to building and sustaining membership:

A. Build membership by making meetings attractive to current and potential new members

- **Publicity**—Better and more information on meetings provided earlier and more widely disseminated—publicize on AOS website at least three months in advance, add photos from field trips, etc., more extensive use of social media for additional dissemination and reminders (especially ALbirds and Facebook, etc). It was noted that improvements in these directions are already being made, with much more information (including photos) going out on the AOS Facebook page and sharing/posting to other pages/groups, via the Public Relations (Lisa Gardner) and Social Media (Carrie Threadgill) committees. A notable addition that is providing some excellent publicity is Ken Hare's Natural Alabama (WSFA.com), which has regularly provided meeting information, as well as promoting the AOS photo contest, providing and sharing member photos, etc., all shared widely on Facebook.

- **Meeting Features**—Quality keynote speakers with educational skills well known to the birding community; this has been a consistent feature of AOS over the years, and continues, with Marshall Iliff (ebird Project Leader) and Kevin Karlson (author of *The Shorebird Guide*) as speakers for upcoming winter and spring AOS meetings respectively; plentiful and well-run field trips with top local birders and opportunities for speakers to lead and/or conduct workshops (Andrew Haffenden's good work and continued success of Friday field trips was noted); greater variety of activities on Friday nights to appeal to a wide audience, e.g., photo contest/slide shows, workshops.

- **Meeting arrangements**—Good food (Wilton's Caterers and potlucks continue to be popular); high quality audiovisual equipment is needed, including purchase of a computer projector; comfortable attractive meeting place (UMC-DI is serving this purpose well and is very convenient to set up and clean up afterwards; possible issues with size in the future if membership and popularity of meetings increases significantly over past levels, as current venue capacity is limited to 95).

- **Point of Business**—Motion was made, and seconded, to allocate \$900 for

purchase of a computer projector— unanimously approved by board.

B. Enhance communications with members and potential members

- Website—Complete updating of website to provide current and useful information to members and potential members; update is now scheduled to begin 11/1/16, by Joe Watts, for \$500. This enhancement was approved during the spring 2016 AOS board meeting (Kathy Hicks was unable to do the update, as originally approved for the same cost). Paypal capability was added to the website on 8/16/16 (cost about \$40; estimated charge at 1-1.5%) to enable online payments and has been well received; continued improvement of online membership registration and membership renewal should be pursued. Additional ideas include adding a hand-drawn map of Dauphin Island to the website, with major birding spots included; a tee shirt might also be produced with the map. A subcommittee from the PR committee will be assigned to study this possibility (Shirley Farrell, education committee chair, will help).
- Facebook—Should continue efforts to keep page active, with good content; send more photos of AOS field trips and meetings to Carrie Threadgill.
- Email Communications—More member emails are needed for more effective communication about important events and occurrences (death of well-known members, important votes, meeting reminders, annual dues notice, participation in board-approved surveys, electronic transmission of *The Yellowhammer*). However, third party use of AOS member emails requires authorization by members; generally best policy is for AOS to pass along third party information to members.
- Whooping Crane Survey (Wayde Morse)—Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences has partnered with The International Crane Foundation to gather information on knowledge, opinions, experiences, and conservation preferences regarding Whooping Cranes in Alabama. It has been proposed to distribute a link to a survey to the Alabama birding community for this purpose. AOS would send the link through member emails and through ALbirds.
- **Point of Business**—Motion made, and seconded, to approve cooperation with organizations conducting research on birds for the state of Alabama—unanimously approved by Board.
- *The Yellowhammer*—Anne proposes offering members free choice between digital and print copies of Yellowhammer. Extra cost of mailing at first class instead of bulk rate will be balanced.
- *Alabama Birdlife*—Anne proposes appointing a committee to consider alternatives for reducing costs (currently costs about \$1,400 per issue) and increasing value of this publication. Consider Jon Dunn's suggestion of collaborating with adjacent states to produce a regional journal. This may not be practical, especially not with the larger adjacent states, perhaps more with Mississippi. Online only journal?

Could consider providing online version at reduced cost or even online only. This topic needs further discussion.

C. Membership—Improve system of new member registration and current member renewal

- Dues notices—Send once yearly in January by email to members receiving *The Yellowhammer* electronically, with envelope/notification in January print edition of YH.
- Create welcome packet to be mailed to all new AOS members with information about organization (including details about meetings and information on on-line communications; include details on how to sign up for ALbirds, email bulletins, etc. PR committee to prepare copy and be ready for use by January (packets currently in progress). New members should consistently be recognized at meeting banquet.
- Send out acknowledgements for all donations; use Sibley postcards with brief message.
- Consider changing name tags for meetings; lanyards tangle too easily out-of-doors.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Elberta Reid reported beginning checking account balance, as of 1/1/16, was \$10,462. Ending checking account balance, as of 10/15/16, was \$28,695, approximately \$18,000 of which are operating funds (\$10,000 is restricted, donation from Martha Sargent toward Fort Morgan). CD balance—\$26,866. Education Fund—from silent auction about \$700. There is a need to better separate operating and restricted funds in budget reports including amount to be allocated to Holliman fund. Need to itemize out fall, spring and winter meeting expenses.

- Point of Business—Treasurer's report approved.

Vice President's Report

Vice President Harry Dean reported that the number of photo contest entries was low (eight entries, 18 photos), but the quality of the entries was very high. Plan is to try again next fall. Contest committee needs to meet and discuss refinements needed to increase participation (e.g., number and type of categories, method of submission and reception of photos, type of prizes, etc.). More traditional and appealing categories (other than category of camera used) and better prizes are probably warranted.

Committee Reports

- **Conservation (Greg Harber)**—DIBS (Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuary): several plots of land donated; Holliman Fund allocation.
- **Holliman Fund:** Point of Business—Motion made, and seconded, to approve an allocation of \$2,000 for the Holliman Fund, in support of bird research by students—unanimously approved by Board.

- **Education (Shirley Farrell)**—AOS and Alabama Youth Birder continue to sponsor the Alabama Green Ribbon Schools Award program. The committee donated \$200 and is providing ongoing support to the bird feeding trail at the Montgomery Public Schools Arboretum and Nature Center. We are looking for volunteers to help with support. Please contact Shirley J. Farrell at shirfarr@gmail.com if you would like to volunteer.

The education committee will hold a silent auction at the Spring 2017 AOS meeting to raise money to purchase Flying WILD curriculum guides for teachers who will attend a three-hour training to learn about birds and birdwatching. Shirley brought Flying WILD into the state of Alabama through BAS and AOS, and will now handle the training throughout the state. There are several training facilitators who will help with the statewide workshops.

- **Point of Business**—Motion made, and seconded, to conduct a silent auction to fund the Flying WILD curriculum —unanimously approved by board.

- **Membership Recruitment (Larry Gardella)**—Efforts to recruit through Birding Alabama and Alabama Birding Trails continue.

- **Public Relations (Lisa Gardner)**—Lisa is working with Kathy Hicks on website development, but currently has limited ability to do much; this should be remedied soon with help from Joe Watts; articles, photos and meeting information posted to Facebook, shared widely by individuals and via other pages such as the Tennessee Valley Audubon Society Facebook page.

- **Social Media (Carrie Threadgill, not present)**—Facebook page should be much more active in posting of meeting, photo contest and other information, which brings us to a much wider audience, also more photo posting/real time posting of photos during meetings has been an excellent idea; photo contest winners and other participants' photos will be posted.

- **Online Services (Kathy Hicks, not present)**—see Public Relations above and earlier discussion in President's Report.

- **The Yellowhammer (Bob Reed)**—Deadline for materials for YH is November 10. Need to transfer Post Office box key to someone as John Porter was doing this. Articles are needed and welcomed for the newsletter.

- **Meetings (Rufina Ward)**—Planning for winter meeting (January 27-29, Guntersville State Park Lodge and Convention Center) going well; block of rooms secured, field trips planned around Guntersville area (more information elsewhere in this issue of YH).

- **Censusing/checklist/Fort Morgan (Greg Jackson, not present)**—Alabama checklist has been updated with latest taxonomical information and sent to ADCNR for processing/printing.

• **Field trips (Andrew Haffenden)**—More field trip leaders are needed, and ideas for field trips. Noted that the AOS meetings are an excellent place to attract keen young birders, given the opportunities to see lots of good birds and learn from some of the best birders in the state; this effort should be further cultivated and promoted; using *The Yellowhammer*, social media and website.