

PSO Board of Directors Teleconference Meeting Summary Minutes
July 9, 2024

Directors Present: Sheree Dougherty, Franklin Haas, Brian Byrnes, Joe Gyekis, Richard Rieger, Jeff Kenney, Karter Witmer, Carolyn Hendricks, Laura Jackson, Brian Miller, Mary Alice Koeneke, Chelsea Beck, David Barber, Doug Wentzel

Ex-officio Members Present: Julia Plummer

Meeting called to order - Brian Byrnes

- ***Motion to approve the May minutes passed with 2 spelling corrections.***

Festival Recap - Brian Byrnes

- We made a few dollars when we we sold some extra T-shirts at the end. Frank reported that we made a profit of \$342.72. All total, 89 T-shirts were sold.
- There were 50-70 responses to the survey Dan sent out. The overwhelming majority were quite happy with the event. We did receive constructive criticism that Frank has added to our planning manual. Half of the negative comments were related to the hotel rooms.

2025 Festival Planning for Lehigh Valley

- Carolyn Hendricks - We need to finalize the date, Frank will be working with the committee planning the blueprint, and many practical suggestions were mentioned regarding the field trips. If there is a program that you're interested in helping with, raise your hand and contact Carolyn.
- Brian - Determining a specific date and timeframe in September to November for the festival will give us an opportunity to do a little bit more outreach in seeking sponsorships than we have in the past. Increasing sponsorships will help address some items in the survey that specifically address costs.
- Frank Haas - A festival planning guideline is under revision. Once finalized, we will put on the website accessible to all the board members and planning members so you'll be able to see exactly what is involved in putting together the festival. Hopefully, within a month or so. For those on the planning committee this year, please submit comments by the middle of July for inclusion in the finalization of the guidelines so the 2025 planning committee has a good basis to work from.

Treasurer's Report - Franklin Haas

- We made a profit of \$342.72, and this was after fearing that we would not break even. The T-shirt sales were a big saving grace. We sold 53 at the Festival itself and then there was a later request for more bringing the total to 89. This put the festival a plus rather than a modest minus on the ledger.

PSO Dues

- Brian - At our last meeting we discussed that we have not raised our dues in a long time and that some costs have been rising. Suggested forming an ad hoc group to come up with a formal recommendation to the board.

Committee volunteers were solicited. Frank offered to chair.

- Discussion: Keep research to similar organizations within a geographic area that may include border states if they exist. NJ may not be equivalent due to Audubon. But certainly Maryland, Delaware, and New York. We want to keep our dues as affordable as possible. But we also want to make sure that we have enough funds to support our programs.

Mary Alice will put together research on other organizations before the end of the week.

- Frank noted PSO journal costs and similar/dissimilarity to nearby statewide organizations. Mary Alice noted that NY has Kingbird, which is done on a regional basis rather than on a county basis, and they publish scientific articles similar to PA Birds. The only thing is that the Federation is structured entirely differently.
- Brian noted there will be apples and oranges comparisons to be made. Of note: Online subscribers are currently subsidizing print subscribers with our flat fee structure, and the increased cost of mailing.
- Further discussion: What percentage of people get the publication electronically? Frank - 70% print/30% online. Encouraging people to get the publication online is cost saving but drawbacks to this format were noted.
- Talking points from board members regarding the online edition.

Harder to read or as thoroughly due to its packed content

Using the embedded links, makes the reading process even more cumbersome.

Solutions may be breaking the online publication up into scheduled emails vs the full edition

Is there feasibility in adding a surcharge for the print edition, and working with the editor for determination re surcharging.

- Current membership is 522 with spring being the renewal time. Family memberships account for 107 of those. Before we get to the meeting of the minds on dues, we'll send out an open invitation to board members for all who want to join the conversation.
- The ad hoc committee will put together a recommendation to bring before the board at a future board meeting.

Request for sponsorship - Birds of Bucks County, 2nd Edition - Brian Byrnes

- Review of sent attachment describing the project. They have now raised \$16,000 towards the printing and have asked the PSO to consider a donation of any size to help finish the project. A donation of \$250 allows for a recognition in the book; a donation of \$500 allows for a quarter page advertisement.
- Not all of these types of sponsorships are at the county region level, some are at the regional level. A motion for approval is needed. I am Brian noted that PSO has generally been supportive of these local efforts and wanted to bring this up for discussion and thoughts.
- Is there any Bucks involvement in PSO at all? Discussion: they certainly have members, in the PA Birds Journal they have impressive county updates, not a lot of involvement organizationally, a festival was once attempted there, but fell through.
- The Quarter page advertisement: If this is an area that we're not getting a lot of engagement, PSO recognition might promote more involvement with new birders coming through and increase the chance of their involvement in the Lehigh Valley festival. Due to location and population, the money would be well spent.
- Brian - We have not traditionally set an annual budget for these type of things and have not received many requests. We have considered them on a case by case basis. In the future we might want to think about setting money aside for these kinds of events or publications.
- **Rich Rieger made a motion to approve a \$500 expenditure for a quarter page advertisement in the Birds of Bucks County, 2nd Edition**
- With no further discussion, the motion was seconded and a vote was taken. **Motion was carried and approved.**
- Brian- follow-up question: Does anybody have a secret talent for designing a quarter page advertisement? Frank will get information on size, put something together, and circulate to the board for approval. Brian will copy email to Frank for all related information regarding payment and advertisement details.

Committees Reports

*Brian - For new members, all past minutes, reports, and bylaws are on the PSO website for your review.

- There are committee leadership openings. Typically board members are engaged with at least one committee, which may include chairing or co-chairing.
- Committees have leeway to work on identified issues and related topics and bring recommendations to the board for programs and strategies to pursue. Committee reports are submitted at each board meeting.

Awards and Nominations - Carolyn/Brian

- Carolyn -We rely on nominations from all members of the board for all categories. When we begin to solicit nominations, we're going to be tapping into each of you. We have a little extra time but we don't want to be too complacent.
- Brian - Awards are generally given out at the festival. That is the timeline we follow.

Community Science and Research - Open

Discussion:

Brian - Doug Gross and Greg Grove have been leaders on this topic for PSO. Greg created the winter raptor survey which PSO has adopted as our own and will continue to support. Greg, and possibly Doug also would be willing to continue to be involved with the the topic.

We are looking for someone to take a leadership and coordination role. Creative use of the Atlas program, BBB, festival, and field trips could be tied in to the committee's function.

- **Joe Gyekis**
- Question: This kind of stuff is exactly up my alley, and the kind of thing that I would like to get involved with. But I think it is worth asking whether having a specific committee under this name is really essential, and if so, what are its essential duties? If it didn't exist last year and everything was fine, then it's not essential.
- A logical thing that this committee could do, is county spotlights and field trips that are coordinated with the Atlas, But it could absolutely happen under the field trips and spotlights domain, and it wouldn't happen or not happen if this committee existed or didn't. So I guess the question that's in my mind is: to what extent does it need to be a committee versus just be part of what this whole organization's about in all the committees that are relevant to it?

Brian Byrnes - I am open to all variations on how we get things done and support science. Talking points

-Form a committee to think this through

-New initiatives or new programs that might make sense as an organizational fit

-we're not going to be launching anything new in the community science world in the next 4 years because of the Atlas.

Conservation - Laura Jackson

I think all of you are familiar with the Newsletter, and there is a conservation column that draws on different topics of avian conservation, and sometimes people contact me with the topic that they wanted to write about, or sometimes I asked people to write about it. Sometimes I do it myself.

So, if any of you are so inclined, and you're interested in a certain topic that ties in with conservation, and you'd like to write a column for the newsletter feel free to let me know I can help you, or you can do it yourself.

PSO is a member of the Endangered Species Coalition. Sometimes we get contacted by fish and wildlife service people, and the Defenders of Wildlife Biological Survey if there's a concern and they are sending a letter to Congress or some other group that ties in with avian conservation. We might be a signatory, and before we can be a signatory to that letter, we have to get board approval. Sometimes that's a really fast turnaround. So if you check the Google group for PSO, and I would check with Brian ahead of time to see if he would agree that this, we may ask for a quick board approval to be a signatory.

So if you have strong feelings against supporting a letter, make sure you let us know. If we don't hear from you in a few days, and we've gotten a quorum, we will send a letter of support. A quorum is 5.

Brian Byrnes - The new bylaws specifically permit things like email votes and how to call a special meeting. I'll review that before another one comes up, just to make sure.

Laura Jackson - We're also part of the American Bird Conservancy. Sometimes we get asked to take action on certain issues through that group.

The main activity of the Conservation Committee is the Breeding Bird Blitz. Karter has done a great job this year, because he's been in charge of publicity, and there'll be a nice summary article in the next PSO Newsletter. But I thought Karter could just give some highlights of the Blitz so everybody can hear a brief recap.

Karter Witmer - The BBB for conservation is something that our Conservation committee does in June. Its purpose is to have birders go out and document breeding species in PA. It raises funds for bird conservation and focused programs. This year we sponsored 3 different projects: Ryder Park, the Pocono Environmental Education Center, and the Allegheny Land Trust. Our fundraising goal was \$20,240. And we met that goal. We ended up raising \$20,967. We're taking donations through the 15th of July.

We had 26 teams this year, which is the most that the Blitz has had and we documented 181 species, which I believe is also the most that the blitz, as a whole, has documented. I know a lot of you had teams, so thank you for your participation and fundraising.

Laura Jackson - We had more groups apply for funding this year. Karter did a lot of publicity beforehand to get the word out.

Education and Field Trips - Jeff Kenney

There are a couple of things planned. Warren County is the spotlight for October. There is the Pelagic trip offered through Hill Star in September and there is the Montana trip offered through Hill Star next June/July. Chad has a trip to one of the hawk watches planned in November, which he rotates between Allegheny Front, Waggoner's Gap, and Hawk Mountain

Discussion: Cochair? Is Jeff officially the chair? Will take if no one else is interested.

- The education committee: Youth Scholarship, Webinar Series, Awards at Festival,

Brian Byrnes - Keep on the committee's radar the BBB schedule and the Atlas and how the county spotlight program could fit in and not create conflicts with participation in the blitz.

Key functions of the Education Committee: Webinar Series, Youth Scholarship Awards, and creating new programs and approaches.

Julia Plummer - Educational seminars were well received and were a good outreach. The big lift on that is finding the right speakers, scheduling, and sending out the advertisement. I'm happy to continue setting up the zoom and running the zoom through the generosity of Penn state and giving us a zoom access. So if there is somebody who wants to take on the process of getting people for those seminars, I can help with the back end and make sure everything runs smoothly.

Brian Miller - I do programming for Presque Isle Audubon. I put together 9-10 speakers each year. Maybe there is an overlap there for a webinar series and identifying speakers.

Sheree Daugherty - I might be able to help with that also.

Julia Plummer - And the other part is scholarships.

Process discussed.

Finance Committee - Frank Haas

Nothing to report.

Memberships, Publicity, Outreach - Open

Publications - Mark (journal), Kaitlyn (newsletter)

Brian Byrnes - Both are ex officio board members who are invited to all of our business meetings but do not vote as board members.

I think the only item that I am aware of on publications is the newsletter, which we now have pretty much all of the content. We have not had any volunteers on the recap of the festival. Let Kaitlin know if anyone is interested in the next day or so. If not we are just going to roll with what we have and there will be no summary of the festival.

Franklin Haas - The current issue of Pennsylvania birds is at the printers.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee - Julia Plummer

Julia Plummer - PORC Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee is moving forward and reviewing records. We continue to have a backlog. We are making a valiant effort at reviewing our backlog of finished records. Except for one. I've just got to get all the rest of the committee to vote on everything from 2021, and then hopefully, 2021 will be done. I have written a report to Submit to PA Birds on all the great birds that we reviewed from the year 2021. And the other big project has been updating our list of our Pennsylvania birds. This is the official list of all the species that have been voted on and have been seen in the State.

We've added 19 species to the PA bird list since the last report, which was 2018.

There were 448 accepted as class one species plus 9 that are provisional. People are continuing to find great new birds and adding them to the state list. We are reviewing things that are submitted through PORC Website. We also pull things in from eBird.

Other business - Brian Byrnes

We will send around a poll for our next meeting date. Something in early September makes sense. I will try to get out the new board member orientation scheduling email next week.

If there is no other business, thank you all for joining. Good to see you. Enjoy the rest of your summer.

Meeting was adjourned.

Minutes submitted by Valerie Dunn