

Audubon of SW Florida Board of Directors Meeting held at Rutenberg Park, Ft. Myers on April 19, 2007

Present: Pete Quasius (Chair), Gerri Reaves, Vince McGrath, Connie Langmann, Dan VanNorman, June Huss, Mary McAuliffe and Amber Crooks

Meeting began at 7:00 pm.

The business meeting began with a welcome to Amber Cross (amber_crooks@hotmail.com, 239.898.7632 cell), a student at FGCU who completed the FL Master Naturalist Wetlands module, courtesy of the Chapter. Amber attended tonight's meeting so that she could express her gratitude in person. Amber is a new member to Audubon.

A welcome back was also extended to June Huss who recently returned from Wyoming.

Discussion by the Chair then followed concerning the (possible) need for a new recording secretary due to lack of meeting minutes for December 2006, February and March 2007. Vince has a copy of the minutes Christina recorded for the meeting in February. Vince gave minutes to Gerri for posting on the Chapter's website.

Motion was made by Pete for Mary to record minutes for the April 2007 meeting. Connie made a second to the motion which then carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda focused on **membership**, Flyways, request for back copies of FL Naturalist and FL Audubon to send to new members and with renewal membership mailings. Mailing and printing costs were discussed. A new remittance envelope with tear-off design for membership renewal fee submittal is in design. Printing costs are out for bid. Maria Quasius is working on this.

With 1500 renewals and 200 new members expected and full rebate during the first year given back by FL Audubon to the Chapter, Pete estimated approximately \$35,000 revenue next year from membership fees. Vince has "hundreds" Flyways to include with "welcome mailing" to new Chapter members. FL Audubon magazines (back issues) may also be handed out at **Earth Day, Koreshan State Park** on Saturday, 4/22/07.

Copies of the new **Birding 101 in SW-FL** (power point format) will be available at Earth Day and will be free to new members; with plans to sell the DVD-formatted version which will be available later in 2007. The new DVD has sound and was produced by Paul Holmes, retired past President of Peace River Audubon chapter. A version for kids may be produced in near future.

Pete bought a portable, flat screen TV with DVD player for use at Earth Day, Mangrove Gathering and other events.

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Although Kathy Zumich, Treasurer, was not present, she will e-mail her monthly **financial report** to Mary. Vince spoke with Kathy who reported the expected grant money has not been received.

There are four outstanding **grants**:

- 1) \$350 from National Audubon for Eco-Breakfast 2007.
- 2) \$600 for EagleKids Camp @ Corkscrew Sanctuary.
- 3) Membership rebate from NAS
- 4) Sponsor checks for eco-breakfast.

For the past ten years SWFCEE and Audubon have hosted a breakfast in October where elected officials, government staffers and NGO reps can interact. In 2006 all of the Lee Commissioners attended with some 200 others to hear Dr. Paul Gray's talk on Lake O problems. (Note: Paul Gray is the Audubon-FL Science Officer at Lake Okeechobee) The event was held at Riverside Park, Ft. Myers, on the shores of the Caloosahatchee. This year's event will include speakers that will address growth issues. Event planners hope to have displays and information tables by NGO's and green developers. Connie volunteered to help Rae Ann Wessel (Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation) set-up the breakfast.

The 2nd grant will be used to sponsor local youth from Hendry, Glades, Charlotte, Lee and Collier counties to attend EagleKids Camp @ Corkscrew Sanctuary or Maitland.

At the February 2007 BOD meeting Kathie distributed a list of affiliated organizations. Each year the Chapter pays to be a member of their organization provided their mission statements and policy allow the Chapter to first review their position statements before they include Audubon of SW-FL as a co-contributor to their cause. EcoSWF does not allow Audubon of SW-FL to review their position statements first before adding the Chapter's endorsement to their cause.

Pete recommended the BOD review the list of **affiliated organizations** and decide which organizations the Chapter should support by becoming a member.

A list of **educational programs** which the Chapter sponsors will be a focus of discussion at next month's BOD meeting; as will budgets. The Groundwater Trust in VT, Andrew Stone, offers a program that trains 25 High School level teachers about environmental issues of local concern. The Chapter authorized a \$450 sponsor fee. Terri will attend (where, when?)

Grant money (\$250) was used to sponsor Amber Crooks, who completed the FMNP-wetlands module. Margaret England-Hendry County Audubon Chapter asked the Chapter to sponsor a FMNP teacher certification position (training only?). The FMNP-certified teacher would train applicants, interested students from the SW-FL Region.

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Pete and Connie are both certified FMNP teachers and agreed the difficulty with this request is in securing enough applicants to meet the criteria of the IFAS-FMNP. A minimum of 10 students must complete a 40-hr module. With existing FMNP certified training programs in the region (Corkscrew had to drop their program for lack of participation), Pete was reluctant to support this request. Connie is willing to teach the FMNP and is already certified. The Chapter would first consider paying Connie to teach FMNP applicants before paying to train another teacher. Connie suggested teaching FMNP classes at Six Mile Cypress as teaching facilities are included in their plans for future construction.

The **website** now includes scholarship information. We can expect to receive an application from Dr. Jerry Jackson's son to attend FGCU graduate school program in Environmental Science. In January the Board approved Pam Morton's request to complete the Cornell home study course in Bird Biology. The cost is \$299.50 and includes a 1300 page text book, audio CD, exams and instructor support.

Dan reported 18 attended the swamp-buggy tour at Corkscrew Sanctuary Saturday night 4/14. Sally Stein is willing to schedule more trips. A quarterly event was suggested. Pete recommended the Chapter schedule trips to the Panther Refuge. Brad Cornell could be the guide. Dan will prepare a list of scheduled and tentative plans for new trip locations for review at next month's meeting. Everyone agreed a Calendar of Events (including tentative events) should be included in Flyways. Year-round events, not just seasonal, will draw new members and generate more revenue.

A **calendar of events** to promote and feature regional festivals, birding, estuarine, coastal and wildlife viewing opportunities should be included in Flyways. Something similar to the yearly calendar by FL Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission would draw potential members to participate in scheduled field trips; generating revenue for the Chapter to sponsor more educational opportunities.

Audubon of FL owns 20 or more parcels of land that are designated **sanctuaries**. These need clean-up to remove trash and exotic plants. A work weekend should be scheduled; preferably in the Fall or Winter when it's cooler and drier. Amber is willing to lead an effort to draw more FGCU students to become members and serve as volunteers in these clean-up events. The "Friends of" clubs and organizations might be willing to volunteer.

The remaining one-third of **Bird Island** near Manatee World will be nominated for 20/20 acquisition. Steve and Susan Brockman's 10-acres on Telegraph Creek and the Caloosahatchee River would be an ideal location for a science-riverine based educational center. The project would need funding and trained staff from AoF.

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Bill Hammond (retiring Environmental History professor at FGCU) will be the Sr. Env Advisor for Babcock Ranch. There is an interview with Bill on FGCU Gulfcoast Live.

The Chapter will attend and have a raffle at the next **Mangrove Gathering** on May 11th at Rutenberg Park. Connie made a motion to sponsor the first annual Mangrove Gathering each year. Vince made a second to the motion which passed unanimously. Pete suggested the Chapter hold their annual meeting on the same day as a Mangrove Gathering each year; with the thought this might draw more members to participate. Connie recommends the Chapter find local bands to play for free and to find a band that would draw a bigger crowd.

WRDA letter was unanimously approved by members of the Conservation Committee. A copy has been posted to the website.

Climate Change Rally in downtown FM was well attended (Gerri and Pete – others?) Good photo and local TV news coverage shows Pete in background with Audubon banner behind presidential candidate John Edwards.

Omni Landfill - Paul Holmes believes the design is good; but location and transportation routes are problems. Transporting materials to/from landfill site (via SR 74) crosses prime panther habitat in Charlotte, Glades & Hendry counties. Lykes Brothers oppose the project. AoF wants the Chapter to take a position. Landfill issue will be discussed at the RCC meeting on 4/29/07 to be held at Manatee World starting at 2 pm.

Note: 7 panthers killed this year. One was killed today in Polk County.

Gerri made a motion to oppose the Omni Landfill. June made a second to the motion which passed; with an exception from Dan (due to his employment with FDEP and potential conflict).

New Business: Pete would like the five local chapters to host the annual Audubon of FL Assembly in 2008. This year the event will take place in Cocoa Beach, November 1st-3rd. Field tours would include visits to Babcock Ranch, Corkscrew, Sanibel-Ding Darling, the Caloosahatchee, Big-O birding trail, Panther Refuge, Everglades and other locations for great birding and wildlife.

Meeting was adjourned at 9 pm.