

New York State Ornithological Association, Inc.
71st Annual Meeting, Henrietta, New York
October 6, 2018

The 71st Annual Meeting of the New York State Ornithological Association, Inc. (NYSOA) was held on October 6, 2018, at the RIT Inn and Conference Center, located at 5257 West Henrietta Road in Henrietta, New York. President Michael DeSha called the meeting to order at 9:35 AM. Roll call of member clubs revealed that 37 delegates from 23 clubs were in attendance and that a quorum was present. Tim Baird made a motion to approve the draft minutes from the 2017 annual meeting. Andy Mason seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

President's Report – Michael DeSha

Mike presented his written report. Highlights of the year include a highly successful annual meeting hosted by the Buffalo Ornithological Society, the beginning of intensive planning for the third New York State Breeding Bird Atlas effort, and significant changes to NYSOA membership routines due to the sudden and totally unexpected death of our membership manager, Berna Lincoln, in October 2017.

Mike reported that Tim Baird, Joan Collins, Carena Pooth, and Kathy Schneider arranged for the NYSOA umbrellas that were given to members attending the annual meeting. The Marketing, Publicity, and Field Trips Committee still lacks a chair, and a volunteer is needed. There are currently no field trips scheduled.

Mike thanked Joan Collins for taking on the role of membership manager. With help from Pat Aitken as circulation manager, Joan has taken over the membership records and will be working to transfer them to Wild Apricot, an online membership management system. Mike also thanked Carena Pooth for her ten years of outstanding service as leader of the New York State Young Birders Club. He reminded the attendees that it is critical that someone be found to continue in her tradition, as she is giving up her role for family health reasons.

Mike's report also summarized the recent activities of the steering committee for the third New York Breeding Bird Atlas (NY BBA III). Unlike past atlases that were under the control of NYSOA, this one will be administered by a collection of entities. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, NYSOA, New York Audubon, and SUNY ESF are all involved. However, NYSOA is well-represented. Kathy Schneider is the co-chair of the steering committee, and Joan Collins, Mike DeSha, Greg Lawrence, and Bob Spahn are all members of the committee. Applications for the job of project coordinator for NY BBA III have been received, and are currently being evaluated by the steering committee.

After delivering his report, Mike commented that it is increasingly difficult for the nominating committee to find candidates for the jobs of officers, directors, and committee chairs as they become vacant. He stressed that it is important for the board to engage in succession planning, and also for members of the organization who are currently not involved to step up and volunteer. Ideally we would find people to shadow the current holders of these positions, preparing to take them over in the future.

Treasurer's Report – Andy Mason

Andy presented three written reports – a balance sheet, a statement of general operating fund activity, and a statement of the activities and balances in other funds. There was nothing unusual to report. Spending was under budget for the year, though it did exceed income. The largest expense continues to

be printing and mailing *The Kingbird*. Andy reminded the group that this will be his final year as treasurer, and asked them to think about candidates for the job.

NYSOA Committee Reports

Audit Committee – Stephen Chang

Andy presented the report on behalf of Stephen and the committee. An audit of NYSOA's financial statements was conducted as of December 31, 2017, and found no problems.

Bylaws – Bob Spahn

Michael DeSha asked for a motion to approve the bylaws revisions that were circulated earlier this year, concerning conflict of interest statements. Bob Spahn moved to approve the revisions, and Brian Dugan seconded. After brief discussion, the revisions were unanimously approved. Bob Spahn also brought up another recent change in New York State law that concerns when nonprofit organizations must notify members of upcoming business meetings. Notice must now be provided no less than 10 days in advance and no more than 50 days in advance. Traditionally, official notice of the upcoming annual meeting has been distributed more than 50 days in advance. An additional notification will now need to be sent to comply with this requirement, but it can be sent by email. Another minor change to the bylaws will be needed to incorporate this requirement. The change was proposed at this meeting and will be voted on at the 2019 annual meeting.

Awards Committee – Bill Ostrander

Bill reported that the President's Award, the Gordon M. Meade Distinguished Service Award, and three Lillian C. Stoner Awards would be presented at the evening banquet. There were no nominees for certificates of appreciation this year, but Bill reminded the group that those nominations can be made at any time.

Conservation Committee – Andy Mason

Andy provided a written report on the committee's work over the past year. A major concern has been the Lake Ontario wind project, which will place 600-foot-high turbines near the shoreline of Lake Ontario. NYSOA opposes industrial-scale turbines within two miles of the Great Lakes shorelines, as well as in certain other areas of the state. Committee member Brian Dugan recently attended a public meeting about the project. Andy stated that the committee will be working over the coming year on a NYSOA position paper on large-scale solar power projects and their effect on grassland bird habitat. He welcomes input from members, and expects to have a resolution on this topic ready to be voted on at the 2019 annual meeting.

Doug Futuyma asked about the status of the committee's work on the issue of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). The Trump administration reinterpreted the MBTA to only prohibit intentional taking or harming of birds; the accidental taking or harming of a species does not apply. Doug mentioned that there is litigation challenging this interpretation, and wondered whether NYSOA could get involved at some level with the lawsuit. There are also efforts in the New York legislature to enact a law that would restore the original interpretation of the MBTA at the state level. Some NYSOA

member clubs have also been communicating with their U. S. Representatives, encouraging them to guard against any effort to pass legislation that would codify the new interpretation.

County and State Listing Project – Carena Pooth

Carena supplied a detailed written report. There were 129 submissions for 2017, the highest number ever. The full report is available on the NYSOA website.

Marketing, Publicity, and Field Trips Committee –

Tim Baird reported for the committee, which is in need of a chairperson. This year's annual meeting giveaway item was a birding-sized umbrella imprinted with the NYSOA name and logo.

Brendan Fogarty delivered a report from Greg Lawrence about the NYSOA Facebook page. Greg's report mentioned that he would like a volunteer to take over the page, and Alison Kocek volunteered immediately. Greg reported that more frequent posts are needed in order to maintain interest in the page, and he encouraged member clubs and individuals to submit photos and other materials for posting. He also recommended that the page make more of an effort to convert casual visitors to NYSOA members.

Joan Collins reported on field trip activity. The committee's goal is to sponsor one to three weekend field trips per year. There was one trip this past year, focused on viewing and learning about crossbills in the Adirondacks.

Membership and Circulation – Joan Collins, Pat Aitken

Joan Collins supplied a written report on membership activity, showing continued growth in all categories of individual membership. Joan and Pat will be working this fall on the project to convert from spreadsheet records to an online membership management system (Wild Apricot). Once this transition is completed, the online system should make the work of the committee significantly easier.

New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC) – Willie D'Anna

Shai Mitra presented a report from Willie. NYSARC continues to make progress catching up with the backlog of reports. The committee has begun meeting via Skype, which has enabled them to meet more frequently. They recently completed review of 2015 reports, and the 2015 annual report is being prepared.

The committee has decided to begin classifying reports of *Larus canus* to subspecies, either (North American) Mew Gull or (European) Common Gull. NYSARC is also planning to begin accepting eBird records of certain species if they are accompanied by photo or sound recording documentation, and accepted by the eBird reviewer. The committee has recently reached out to the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, which is already accepting certain eBird records, to discuss the difficult issues involved. The plan will enable the inclusion of records that are never reported directly to NYSARC. This will only apply to species that have been determined not to pose difficult identification problems. There will also be a list of species that will continue to require full NYSARC review before acceptance.

The terms of three committee members will be coming due at the end of this year – Andy Guthrie, Doug Gochfeld, and Derek Rogers. The process of renewing their terms, or replacing one or more, is

currently underway. Andy is noted as having been an extremely valuable member of the committee for the past fourteen years.

New York State Young Birders Club (NYSYBC) – Carena Pooth

Carena submitted a written report detailing the club's activities and membership statistics. More than three-quarters of the club's members live in southeastern New York. There were eleven field trips scheduled for this year, though one was canceled due to weather. NYSYBC has awarded more than \$33,000 in scholarships since the program began in 2010. Other than a \$500 startup grant from NYSOA, all of the club's money has been raised by the club. Carena notified the parents of the club members that she would be resigning as leader, and several of them contacted her with offers to help however they could with operational and administrative tasks going forward.

Publications – Seth Ausubel

Shai Mitra provided an update on his efforts to get *The Kingbird* caught up to its publication schedule. He expects that two more issues will be sent to the printer before the end of the year. Shai mentioned that there is turnover in the regional editor jobs, so we should be thinking about and speaking with potential candidates.

Joan Collins reported that she is always in need of contributions for *New York Birders*, which is published quarterly. In particular, reviews of books and apps of interest to birders would be helpful. Joan reports that the volunteer profiles are one of the more popular features of the newsletter.

Carena Pooth reported on the latest changes to the *Checklist of the Birds of New York State*. There were several taxonomic changes made by the American Ornithological Society that are reflected in the updated checklist. The printed version of the checklist will be available in time for the next round of membership renewals. Shai Mitra mentioned that the regional reports in *The Kingbird* will be switching to the new taxonomic order.

Research – Greg Lawrence

Greg's prepared report was delivered by Brendan Fogarty. The primary focus of the committee this year will be NY BBA III, as well as the annual waterfowl count. Greg will continue as chair of the research committee. He plans to query researchers, conservation partners, and birders in order to develop a list of the top priorities for ornithological research in New York. Greg also plans to make efforts to increase coverage of Breeding Bird Survey routes across the state.

Kathy Schneider reported on the status of planning for NY BBA III. She said that there are seven parties involved in this atlas, unlike previous atlases which were conducted by NYSOA and DEC. The parties are the New York Natural Heritage Program, New York State DEC, Audubon New York, eBird/Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Cornell Cooperative Research Unit, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF), and NYSOA. The committee has been meeting since 2015 and has already put a lot of time into planning. They have obtained a federal grant of \$750,000, which will be routed to DEC. DEC will contract with ESF, ESF will hire the Natural Heritage Program, and the Natural Heritage Program will hire people to work on the atlas. Making all of those arrangements has consumed much of the committee's time to date. They are now forming four subcommittees to address many issues that need to be worked out. The steering committee is also working on a governance structure to define the roles and relationships of the various entities involved with the atlas. Fifty-six applications were received for the project coordinator position, and the committee is in the process of

making a selection. The committee has written a job description for the regional coordinator positions, and they are beginning to talk to potential candidates. One of the main job duties will be identifying and training volunteers, including teaching them to use the eBird mobile app. The job will also involve review of submitted data, and some degree of oversight of the block sign-up process. It has yet to be determined exactly how the block sign-up process will be divided between eBird and the regional coordinators. Candidates for the regional coordinator jobs will need a thorough knowledge of not only the birds of New York, but also of the birders in their region and their skill levels. The committee is working to develop a pool of candidates for these jobs, and welcomes input. Kathy and Bob Spahn both stated that although a substantial grant was obtained, additional fundraising will be needed. Mike DeSha recommended that NYSOA budget funds to assist with the atlas in coming years. Mike also reported that, after discussion with Andy Mason, he volunteered to have NYSOA serve as a repository for funds coming into NY BBA III from outside sources. A separate account will be created for this purpose.

Waterfowl Count – Bill Ostrander

Bill reported on the 2018 count, the results of which will be published in an upcoming issue of *The Kingbird*. A regional coordinator for the count is needed for Region 9, in southeastern New York.

Website and Information Services – Carena Pooth

Carena presented a printed report detailing all of the updates to the NYSOA website. The report also includes lists of the most visited sections of the website. After the home page, the most popular page on the site is the *Checklist of the Birds of New York State*. The Christmas Bird Count calendar and the NYSARC reports are also among the most viewed portions of the site. Carena also completed a project to convert the entire website to a secure protocol, so that certain web browsers would no longer display a “Not Secure” message. The portion of the website that accepts payments has always used the secure protocol, but it was previously not needed for the remainder of the pages.

DEC Report – Mike Wasilco, DEC Region 8 Wildlife Manager

Mike presented a comprehensive report that was prepared by the DEC Central Office summarizing their work. The information was somewhat dated, covering the period ending in March 2018, since DEC has not had a bird specialist on staff since John Ozard retired last year. They are currently in the process of hiring a new bird specialist to fill John’s position in Albany. The report summarizes DEC’s monitoring efforts for various habitats and species of concern. Mike mentioned the need for volunteers to assist with alpine forest bird monitoring. He also reported on the Young Forest Initiative, a project to maintain early succesional habitat, which is needed by certain species. The goal is to maintain young forest habitat on 10 percent of the land in Wildlife Management Areas. The report also states that DEC staff covered thirteen Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) routes in 2017, but that more than 30 percent of the BBS routes in the state continue to go uncovered.

Election of Officers

Bob Adamo presented the following 2018-2019 slate of officers and directors on behalf of the Nominating Committee:

Officers

President:	Michael DeSha
Vice President:	Tim Baird
Treasurer:	Andy Mason

Secretary: John Kent

Directors 2018-2020

Joseph Brin
Doug Futuyma
Richard Guthrie
Shirley Shaw
Bob Spahn

Shai Mitra made a motion that the secretary cast one ballot for the slate of officers and directors. It was seconded by Alison Kocek, and the slate was elected unanimously. In addition to the new directors, Brian Dugan, Brendan Fogarty, Lucretia Grosshans, and Carena Pooth will be continuing for the second year of their current terms.

Andy Mason made a motion that the secretary cast one ballot to re-elect Bob Adamo (Chair), Kathy Schneider, and Dominic Sherony to the Nominating Committee. Shai Mitra seconded, and it was approved unanimously.

Doug Futuyma made a motion that the secretary cast one ballot to re-elect Stephen Chang (Chair), Tom Burke, and Peter Capainolo to the Auditing Committee. Shai Mitra seconded, and it was approved unanimously.

Kevin McGowan made a motion to elect the Friends of the Washington County Grasslands IBA as a new member organization of NYSOA. Alison Van Keuren seconded, and it was approved unanimously.

New Business

The 2019 annual meeting will be hosted by the Catskill Center, and will take place September 13-15 in the Kingston area. Peg DiBenedetto of the Catskill Center reported that planning is underway, and that they have the enthusiastic support of the John Burroughs Natural History Society, which will be planning field trips and providing leaders.

Onondaga Audubon is considering hosting the 2020 annual meeting.

Kevin McGowan moved to adjourn, and Peg DiBenedetto seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
John Kent
Recording Secretary