

New York State Ornithological Association, Inc.
73rd Annual Meeting
October 3, 2020

The 73rd Annual Meeting of the New York State Ornithological Association, Inc. (NYSOA) was held by videoconference on October 3, 2020. President Shirley Shaw called the meeting to order at 9:32 AM. Electronic roll call of member clubs revealed that 31 delegates from 24 clubs were in attendance and that a quorum was present. Greg Lawrence made a motion to approve the draft minutes from the 2019 annual meeting, which had been circulated previously. Kathy Schneider seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

President's Report – Shirley Shaw (full text)

Albeit different from anything we could have imagined when we assembled in Kingston last year for our Annual Birders' Conference and NYSOA Annual Meeting, it is good to be getting together again with our members and organization delegates, even if not in person. Thank you for registering for our meeting and for being a part of NYSOA.

NYSOA has had a busy year. Because of the pandemic, the NYSOA Board of Directors and committee chairs have met via teleconference in February, April, and July—last having assembled in person on November 2, 2019. We continue all our projects: Breeding Bird Atlas III, NYSARC, *The Kingbird*, *New York Birders*, conservation, the County Listing Project, Young Birders Club, etc., and long for the time we can again gather for field trips and our annual conference. I look forward to resuming in-person activities when it is prudent to do so.

Carena Pooth has put many, many hours this year in our endeavor to upgrade NYSOA's membership records with software that will allow our members to manage and update their own personal information, so that we don't have to have someone laboriously enter all that data into a spreadsheet, generate mailing lists, etc. We are so fortunate that we have a member as hardworking, dedicated, and knowledgeable as she is to do this major project.

I am enormously grateful to John Kent, for his years of service to NYSOA as our Recording Secretary. John writes clear, readable minutes that are accurate and thorough. I appreciate the time John has spent in this job over the years, and I wish him the best as he retires from the position.

Perhaps you remember that Onondaga Audubon was to host our traditional three-day NY Birders' Conference and NYSOA Annual Meeting this weekend. With the shut down in March, it became clear that the organizers would be unable to make the necessary arrangements as venues were closed, and it was impossible to know when the state would re-open and under what conditions. The Board decided to hold only the Annual Meeting (Delegates' Meeting) this year, via videoconference. Onondaga Audubon graciously agreed to host the traditional meeting in 2022. In July, Saw Mill River Audubon let the Board know that the continuing uncertainty made hosting in 2021 impossible for them, but they stepped up to host in 2023. The Board will make decisions about the 2021 meeting soon and resume in-person functions when we can. I have already had some preliminary discussions with people, and I am hopeful that we can arrange more than just the Delegates' Meeting, whether an in-person meeting is possible or not.

Once our usual conference resumes, I look forward to seeing so many of you, and especially the young people in the New York State Young Birders Club. Many of these kids could not attend our conference if not for various sources of financial support, including our Lillian Stoner Award. Replenishing this fund to assist young birders' participation is important, and I encourage all NYSOA members to consider a donation to the fund.

Mentoring future birding leaders and ornithologists requires the involvement of many adults. The Board voted this year to establish the Herbert Thompson Award in memory of this wonderful role model whom we lost too soon. The goal is to recognize adults who give of their knowledge and time to educate and encourage our young birders. A selection process is being developed.

NYSOA is one of seven organizations partnering to produce New York Breeding Bird Atlas III, a five-year project led by a steering committee of representatives from the partners. Kathy Schneider serves as a NYSOA representative as well as co-chairing the steering committee, and Greg Lawrence and Joan Collins also serve as our representatives. Bob Spahn devoted his time and expertise to this project until he left the steering committee last fall. Bob has extensive experience in atlasing due to his work on past atlas projects in New York and elsewhere. I thank him for his service.

One of NYSOA's roles in NY BBA III is to receive funds from donations and handle disbursements to cover expenses. This year NYSOA and the Atlas Steering Committee established a set of guidelines for dealing with the donations fund. We are pleased that Andy Mason will undertake accounting responsibilities.

The Atlas affords NYSOA an opportunity to introduce ourselves to the birders submitting breeding bird data into the Atlas portal who are not currently NYSOA members and who may be unaware of the benefits of membership. COVID stopped Atlas kick-off activities in which NYSOA hoped to play a large part, and we are exploring other ways to connect with potential new members through Atlas-related contests and events, including field trips directly related to BBA III data gathering, as soon as it is safe to do so.

One of the truly enjoyable tasks that the president has is responding to people who reach out to us through our website with questions about birds. A nonagenarian wrote because she wanted advice about a book to help her identify the birds at her feeder. Another person sent a photo of a Peregrine with prey. Kathy Schneider recognized the victim as a chicken by identifying its feet. Another writer was walking along the Mohawk and observed lots of Great Egrets. She didn't know what the beautiful white birds were, and I was able to provide her a link that confirmed their identity. The lack of traffic noise during the pandemic led a reporter from *Newsday* to wonder how the situation was impacting birds. I answered some of his questions and referred him to Shai Mitra for more insights.

Committee chairs are reporting on most of the activities and work NYSOA does. A round of applause is due all our chairs for their work on NYSOA's behalf. A special welcome to Matt Palumbo from the DEC, who has provided NYSOA with reports from his agency since April. At a time when revenue losses due to the pandemic will affect virtually every area of New York

State government, it is important that necessary funding cuts impact New York's efforts at conservation as little as possible. We appreciate Matt's dedication to keeping us abreast of DEC activities and developments.

A big shout of thanks to Pat Aitken, Mike DeSha, Greg Lawrence, Carena Pooth, Kathy Schneider, and Anne Swaim for assisting me in the planning of this meeting. What would we do in this time of necessary isolation and social distancing without all the benefits of our technology?

It is an honor to serve NYSOA as its president. I wish all NYSOA members good health and good birding.

Treasurer's Report, Finance Committee Report, Audit Report – Mary Jane Dugan, Andy Mason
Andy Mason presented written financial reports covering 2019, when he was treasurer. The reports include activity and balance summaries for each fund, and a detailed statement of activity in the general operating fund. There was nothing unusual to report.

Mary Jane Dugan presented a report on how the rapid increase in printing and mailing costs led the board to decide to institute a fee for hard copies of *The Kingbird*. She pointed out that in order to know the net effect of this decision, we would need to know not only the additional revenues from the new fee, but also whether any memberships were dropped due to the change.

A written statement from the audit committee was presented. An audit was completed of the financial statements as of December 31, 2019, and found that the statements present fairly the financial condition of the Association.

Approval of Membership of Orange County Audubon Society – Joan Collins
Joan announced that Orange County Audubon Society has applied to become a NYSOA member organization. Greg Lawrence moved to approve the application, and Kathy Schneider seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

DEC Report – Matt Palumbo

Matt submitted a written report on bird-related activities of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation over the past year. He summarized the report during the meeting. The state's list of threatened and endangered species is being updated, and there will be opportunities for public input. Matt's section has been busy reviewing proposed renewable energy projects for their potential impacts on threatened and endangered species, especially the impact of large-scale solar developments on grassland birds. Matt provided a link to proposed regulatory changes from the Office of Renewable Energy which are meant to streamline the approval of renewable energy projects. His written report provided details on specific aspects of his section's work. Their field work this year has been heavily restricted by the pandemic.

Breeding Bird Atlas (NY BBA III)

Kathy Schneider, co-chair of the NY BBA III Steering Committee, presented a written report on the first year of atlas activities, including summaries of the work being done by the various subcommittees. Her report also included links to NY BBA III outreach and fundraising resources. The Steering Committee is still looking for a regional coordinator for the Syracuse area. Julie Hart, the atlas project

coordinator, has used social media and email to engage birders across the state and encourage atlas participation. Kathy stated that the pandemic also seemed to contribute to high levels of participation in the atlas, though travel restrictions meant that most activity took place close to major population centers. There were over 100,000 checklists submitted through the atlas portal, and 80% of the priority blocks were visited at least once. The committee is discussing ways to draw more birders to cover priority blocks in the lightly populated regions of New York. Kathy stated that there is currently no funding available for a component of the atlas to estimate abundance. Given the state's fiscal outlook, it seems unlikely that funding will be available. There is concern that asking volunteers to do point counts would draw them away from basic atlas work. The Design and Analysis Subcommittee is reviewing alternatives. The Sponsor-a-Species program is being developed by Dan Miller. It is hoped that this program will raise approximately \$250,000 over the five year atlas period. The Development Subcommittee is increasingly concerned about government funding for the atlas beyond March 2022, when the memorandum of understanding with the state DEC expires. A chair is needed for the Development Subcommittee.

Waterfowl Count – Bill Ostrander

Bill reported on the 2020 waterfowl count, which was held in January. Detailed results will appear in *The Kingbird*. The 2021 count will run January 16-24, with a target date of January 17.

Emanuel Levine Memorial Award – Shai Mitra

Shai presented the Levine award for the best article in *The Kingbird* for 2019 to Deborah Dohne. Deborah's article, entitled "Breeding between Clay-colored and Chipping Sparrows in a Syracuse, New York Cemetery", appeared in *The Kingbird*, Volume 69, Number 4.

***The Kingbird* – Shai Mitra**

Shai reported that the transition to digital publication of *The Kingbird* has gone smoothly. The backlog in publication dates has largely been eliminated thanks to Shai's and Pat Lindsay's efforts to speed up publication over the past couple of years. It was pointed out that if the number of members opting to receive a hard copy of *The Kingbird* falls below 200, we will no longer qualify for the bulk mail rate and mailing costs will increase substantially.

New York Birders – Joan Collins

Joan submitted a written report summarizing the columns and articles published over the past year. Julie Hart has provided articles about NY BBA III for each issue, and these will continue throughout the duration of the atlas project. Joan recommended that members opt for electronic delivery of *New York Birders* so that they can see the color photographs.

Field Trips – Joan Collins

A weekend field trip was held last winter in the Adirondacks, with a presentation by Julie Hart about species that breed early in the year. The 25 participants enjoyed the weekend and saw most of the Adirondack specialty birds. Unfortunately, the pandemic has made it impossible to plan the same type of weekend field trips for the time being, but the committee is discussing alternatives.

Checklist of the Birds of New York State – Carena Pooth

Carena reported that there were only minor changes to the checklist resulting from the updates in the AOS 61st supplement. The online checklist and printable field checklist were updated in July 2020, and the 2021 booklet will be published in time for the 2021 NYSOA membership renewal cycle.

County and State Listing – Carena Pooth

There were 135 participants for 2019, a new record. Carena's written report summarizes the statistics. Participants may submit their 2020 data anytime between now and March 1, 2021.

Website and Information Services – Carena Pooth

Carena submitted a written report on changes to the website and the most-visited pages on the site. The report includes a summary of the work in progress to effect a transition to an online membership management system. Carena has spent many hours working to convert our membership database to the format needed for the new system. Once the transition is complete, it is expected to substantially reduce the workload on the Membership and Circulation Committee, and will enable members to access and manage their own profile information in the membership database.

Conservation Committee – Andy Mason

Andy submitted a written report and summarized it during the meeting. The committee worked on the endangered and threatened species list, Lake Ontario wind power issues, and potential development projects in Suffolk County. The committee is concerned about the state's proposed revision of its environmental review process for alternative energy projects, and will be submitting comments. Andy encouraged member clubs to review and comment on the proposal as well. The committee's documents can be found on the conservation page of the NYSOA website.

Marketing and Publicity – Brian Dugan

Brian reported that he continues to work on creating the NYSOA Zazzle site, making NYSOA-branded items available for sale via the NYSOA website. The committee plans to supply articles for publication in *The Conservationist*, and a review panel consisting of Andy Mason, Rich Guthrie, and Brian Dugan will vet these articles.

Membership and Circulation – Pat Aitken, Joan Collins

A written report was submitted showing trends in membership over the past ten years. Pat summarized the report during the meeting. It shows a decrease of 101 individual members in the past year, but that is largely due to the delayed deletion of memberships that had not been renewed over the past few years. Two member organizations did not renew, but one new one was added. Pat reported that the NYSOA member survey is in progress and reminded all members to respond to it.

New York State Young Birders Club (NYSYBC) – Rosanne Vinson

Rosanne summarized her written report. Although field trips have been suspended since March, the club has held monthly online meetings featuring presentations by club alumni. The 12th annual kickoff event in January featured presentations by several members, and Anne Swaim spoke about NY BBA III. Rosanne reported that NYSYBC normally grants scholarships to fund members' attendance at birding camps and other ornithology programs, but that those were not held this year due to the pandemic. However, two young birders received scholarships to help cover the cost of their participation in online educational programs.

Election of Officers

On behalf of the nominating committee and the board, Bob Adamo presented the following slate of nominees for officers and directors:

Officers: (one year terms)

President: Shirley Shaw

Vice President: Greg Lawrence

Treasurer: Mary Jane Dugan

Recording Secretary: Anne Swaim

Directors: (terms ending in 2022)

Corey Finger

Gerry Thurn

Joe Brin

Patricia Riexinger

Shane Blodgett

Bob Adamo moved to elect the nominees on the slate. Shai Mitra seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

The following will be continuing as directors (terms ending in 2021):

Pat Aitken

Brian Dugan

Brendan Fogarty

Lucretia Grosshans

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Shirley Shaw presented the following committee nominees:

Nominating Committee: (one year term)

Bob Adamo (Chair)

Mike DeSha

Tim Baird

Greg Lawrence made a motion to have the secretary cast a ballot for these three individuals for the Nominating Committee. Diane Morton seconded, and it was approved unanimously.

Auditing Committee: (one year term)

Stephen Chang (Chair)

Tom Burke

Peter Capainolo

Thomas O'Donnell made a motion to have the secretary cast a ballot for these three individuals for the Auditing Committee. Barbara Butler seconded, and it was approved unanimously.

Shirley Shaw thanked Doug Futuyma, Rich Guthrie, and Bob Spahn for their service on the board for the past few years.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Diane Morton made a motion to adjourn. Thomas O'Donnell seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
John Kent
Recording Secretary