

**FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS, INC.
49 TH ANNUAL MEETING
COLONIE, NY 6-8 SEPTEMBER 1996**

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At 9:03 AM., Saturday September 7, 1996, President Bob Budliger called to order the meeting of the Council of Delegates at the 49th Annual Meeting of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, hosted by the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club in Colonie. He noted that the issue of the governance of the Federation needed resolution, and asked that the reports of committee chairs be brief.

A roll call of member clubs conducted by the Recording Secretary showed that 40 out of a possible 114 authorized delegates were available to vote. This exceeded the minimum of 12 and thus constituted a quorum. A total of 24 of 39 clubs were represented.

The minutes of the 48th Annual Meeting were published in *The Kingbird* [1996 Jun;46(2):123-135]. A motion by Rich Guthrie to accept the minutes was seconded and approved.

In lieu of appointing a Resolutions Committee, Bob Budliger volunteered to craft resolutions to be read at the evening banquet.

Bob Budliger submitted the appended President's Report along with the remark that much had been accomplished but that challenges lie ahead.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Filling in for Myrna Hemmerick who was absent due to illness, Berna Lincoln gave the Membership Report specifying that at the end of 1995 there were 558 annual members, 85 life members and 40 member clubs. At the beginning of 1996, a successful membership promotion was performed using an American Birding Association mailing list, which resulted in a 12.9 percent response, for a total of 100 new members. As of the date of the Annual Meeting, there are 658 annual members, 41 member clubs and 83 life members, for a total of 782.

Two new clubs made application to join the Federation; such decision is the purview of the Council of Delegates. Both clubs, the Audubon Society of the Capital Region and the South Shore Audubon Society, were accepted.

Manny Levine made the report of Publications Committee. He noted that *The Kingbird*, edited by Don Windsor, and *New York Birders*, edited by Phyllis Jones, are on time, and that the book, *Bull's Birds of New York State*, will meet its manuscript deadline.

Newly appointed Chair Mary Alice Koenke gave the Conservation Committee report. She noted that they truly are a committee, with two volunteers, but that they would welcome more! She reported that the Environmental Bond Act, if passed, would contain \$1.75 billion for projects including a variety of major clean water initiatives. She encouraged delegates to ask their member clubs to support it. She went on to describe Teaming With Wildlife, funded by a tax on outdoors products, in which the user both pays and benefits. She noted that the Federation is signed on as a supporter, and urged delegates to ask member clubs and chapters to support it as well. She has postcards that can be sent to manufacturers encouraging their support as well. There was a motion by Rich Guthrie to go on record to support the Environmental Bond Act, seconded by Norm Stotz, and approved.

The Field Trip Committee report was made by Valerie Freer, who listed the five that have been conducted. She thanked the leaders and noted that participation has varied from a few to more than 20. She listed upcoming trips and encouraged both leaders and suggestions for future trips.

Charlie Smith gave the report of the Research Committee, noting that there were 112 breeding bird survey routes of which 90 percent were assigned and about 85 percent covered. He reported on a study of 128 species over the period 1966 - 1994. Seventy percent of the species are either increasing or unchanged in population. New York State is tracking the decrease of populations of species in successional habitats (meadows and shrub lands).

Charlie strongly cautioned the audience about proclaiming concern over any species' population decline before it has been scientifically documented.

Addressing plans for the 1997 Annual Meeting, Bob Budliger reported that High Peaks Audubon Society is the host club; it's scheduled for 12 - 14 September at the Lake Placid Hilton. Looking further ahead, the 1998 site is Rochester, 1999 is still open and in 2000 it will be in the Geneva area, hosted by the Eaton Birding Society.

Bob Budliger reported that the New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC) has a full complement of members. He has appointed two people and will make another appointment at the end of 1996. Current membership (year term ends) consists of:

Bob Paxton	(1996)	Tom Burke	(1998)	Ken Able	(2000)
Robert Andrie, Chair	1997	Charlie Smith	(1999)		

NYSARC evaluated 67 reports for 1994, 15 for 1993, and is working to address its backlog, now that they have five members. Bob Budliger acknowledged that there is concern over what happens to reports to the committee; he is addressing the issue of responsiveness.

Bill Lee made the report of the Nominating Committee, which is chaired by the immediate past president and also includes the two preceding presidents. Stanley Lincoln and Chad Covey. The Committee presented the following slate

of candidates for officer positions for the 1996 - 1997 term, all of whom are incumbent in those offices:

President:	Robert E. Budliger
Vice President:	Valerie Freer
Corresponding Secretary:	William B. Reeves
Recording Secretary:	Scott Stoner
Treasurer:	Berna B. Lincoln

All the above persons were elected to their specified office for the 1996 - 1997 term.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Berna Lincoln then presented the Treasurer's Report, distributing a detailed 1995 Annual Financial Report to each club. As of 31 December 1995, total assets of the Federation were \$88,920.54 and total liabilities were \$3,565.65. Specific fund balances were:

Award Funds:	
John J. Elliott	\$1,327.83
Lilian C. Stoner	2,429.31
Member Clubs	5,000.00
General Memorial Fund	29,478.07
Atlas 2000 Fund	4,281.05
<i>Bull's Birds of NY State Fund</i>	6,778.96
Life Member Fund	18,189.50
General Operating Fund	17,870.17
TOTAL FUND BALANCES	\$85,354.89

In the General Operating Fund, receipts were \$14,329.94 and expenses were \$12,526.28, with an excess of receipts over expenses of \$1,803.66. She announced that John Bull intends to make a contribution to the *Bull's Birds of New York State Book Fund*.

Richard Sloss reported for the Auditing Committee consisting of himself, Irving Cantor and Norman Stotz that the financial statements of the Federation for the year ending 31 December, 1995 were examined on 20 August, 1996 and found to be presented fairly in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

Charlie Smith addressed the issue of grants to member clubs. Three requests were received; an award of \$100 was made to Cattaraugus County Bird Club for a project to conduct avian censusing to compare population changes in blowdown areas to undisturbed control sites at Allegheny State Park.

AWARDS

Awards are made as follows: The Lillian C. Stoner Award goes to David Paleias. Charlie Rouse reported that the Elon Howard Eaton Award is going to Kevin L. Berner of SUNY-Cobleskill for work on Eastern Bluebirds. The John J. Elliott Award is not being presented this year.

Bob Budliger announced that the Gordon M. Meade Award would be presented at the evening banquet to Paul DeBenedictis; the actual plaque will be sent later. Bob noted that we need a larger Awards Committee, which will develop criteria, procedures and time lines to encourage and increase nominations.

In the report of the Bylaws Committee, Richard Sloss noted that amendments adopted last year (re: quorum and terms for Directors) had been ratified by more than two thirds of the clubs and are part of the Bylaws.

MORE COMMITTEE REPORTS

Phyllis Jones, in a report of the Archive and the Bibliography committees, stated that the Archive is doing well but needs material. Work on the bibliography for 1995 is underway and will be published in the December issue of *The Kingbird*.

Bob Miller gave a report from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. This report is presented as a separate article in this edition of *The Kingbird*.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to elect the past three past presidents (Stanley Lincoln, Chad Covey, and Bill Lee) to constitute the Nominating Committee.

A motion was made and seconded to reelect the current members of the Auditing Committee (Richard Sloss, Norman Stotz, and Irving Cantor); motion passed.

After a short break, the meeting continued.

GOVERNANCE

Issues of governance of the Federation were the subject of the remainder of the meeting. Bob Budliger highlighted the issues as set forth in the attached handout to the delegates.

In the considerable discussion that ensued, the value of examining how other states' organizations are structured was stressed, and concern was expressed about how to achieve a balance between individuals and clubs. The meeting did not resolve the issue of governance, but delegates were asked to take the issues back to their clubs for further discussion and input.

There was no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:52 A.M.

EVENTS

The meeting attendees enjoyed many events beyond the Council of Delegates' Meeting. On Friday afternoon, early arrivals ignored the late summer heat and went on an afternoon field trip. Later in the afternoon, registrants enjoyed Rich Guthrie's talk on conducting Christmas Bird Counts. After the Friday evening buffet dinner, Dr. Paul Kerlinger gave an enlightening talk on the impact birders can make on the economy of specific areas. On Saturday morning, delegates could attend an early field trip to local Ann Lee Pond, while non-delegates had a choice of four trips at 8:00 AM.

At lunch time, many folks were able to make the short drive over to the Albany County Airport to see Baird's Sandpiper and other shorebirds amid the noise of the very low flying planes.

WORKSHOPS AND PAPERS SESSIONS

Leading off the afternoon was a major presentation by Dr. Jeffrey Wells, New York State Coordinator for National Audubon Society on the Important Bird Areas (IBA) program. Following this were concurrent presentations of papers and workshops. Workshops included "Fall Warbler Identification" by Walter Ellison and "Birding the Internet" by Gregg Recer and Jane Graves.

Chaired by Ken Able, the paper session included "Fall migration of jaegers on Lake Ontario" by Dominic Sherony, "GAP Analysis for grassland bird conservation" by Charlie Smith, "Fall migration of common passerines" by Valerie Freer, "House Finch migration" with Ken Able, "Fun facts about waterfowl in NY State" with Bryan Swift and concluded with Max Wheat's reading of "Bird migration in poetry."

BANQUET

Awards were presented at the Saturday night banquet, attended by 174 persons. Overall meeting attendance was about 200. The Gordon M. Meade Award for Distinguished Service was given to Paul DeBenedictis, who was unfortunately unable to attend due to illness. A Member Club Grant was presented to the Cattaraugus Bird Club by Charles Smith, and accepted by Richard Wright. The Elon Howard Eaton Award was presented by Charlie Rouse of the Eaton Birding Society to Kevin L. Berner for his work on bluebird conservation. David Paleias, a biology student from the State University at New Paltz, was the recipient of the Lilian Stoner Award and was introduced by Seldon Spencer of the John Burroughs Natural History Society.

In the Keynote Address, Ken Able gave a comprehensive report on the state of our understanding of bird migration, much of which has been elucidated by his own research.

DEPARTURE

On Sunday morning, folks had the opportunity to attend 'inland pelagic trips' on either the Mohawk or Hudson Rivers, which provided both good birding and an enjoyable conclusion to a fine weekend conference.

Respectively submitted,
Scott J. Stoner, Recording Secretary

ATTACHMENTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

1. First, and foremost, thanks to the many volunteers who serve you as officers committee chairs, committee members, editors, etc., the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs is alive and well. Thank you, one and all.
2. The Conservation Committee was reestablished and has begun the important work of monitoring conservation/environmental actions as they relate to birds and bird habitats. The Federation played a pivotal role in helping the National Audubon Society start its Important Bird Area (IBA) program in New York. No fewer than 15 Federation leaders and *Kingbird* editors serve on the IBA advisory and technical committees.
3. A membership drive was completed with great success.
4. NYSARC has a full committee now, and it is working on an unfortunate backlog. The committee placed the highest priority on assessing species new to the state in time for inclusion in *Bull's Birds of New York State*.
5. With DEC's commitment of \$30,000, and donations from member clubs, individuals, and a foundation, there is assured funding to complete *Bull's Birds of New York State*.
6. Smooth transitions of editors of *The Kingbird* and *New York Birders* illustrate the professionalism of both outgoing and incoming editors.
7. No progress on issues of governance can be reported. Much discussion has taken place in quarterly Executive Committee meetings, but no actions or recommendations have resulted. (report follows)
8. Finally, thank you BIRDERS. For all you do to keep birds in birding.

Bob Budliger, President

FNYSBC GOVERNANCE ISSUES

We briefly discussed Federation governance issues at last year's Council of Delegates meeting. I asked that the concerns be taken back to your clubs and give me feedback. The response has been underwhelming.

The issues have been discussed at each of the ensuing quarterly Executive Committee meetings. Everyone recognizes the "problem", agrees "it" ought to

be fixed, but there has been no resolution. Incidentally, I'm told this is not a new discussion, it having been raised at least 10 years ago.

The Problem: The Executive Committee, as we know it, is inconsistent with New York law. Only an elected body can legally make decisions and be held accountable for them.

1. The Council of Delegates is the Federation's governing body; its members are appointed by member clubs.
2. The Executive Committee is made up of the Board of Directors (officers), who are elected by the delegates, and up to 10 members-at-large, appointed by the President. Only the officers vote on action items, but the whole body is counted to determine a quorum.

Additional Issues

1. Individual members cannot vote, but are the basis of our economic viability.
2. At the same time, 10 or more individual members can nominate candidates for election.
3. Member club can be an "incorporated or unincorporated" club of 10 or more.
4. Amendments are effected by majority vote of delegates, but ratified by 2/3 vote of member clubs, an inconsistency.
5. Organization is not named in its bylaws. It is named in its incorporation papers.
6. There is anecdotal evidence that our name, disenfranchisement of individual members, and confusion of governance may impede member recruitment.

Who Cares ?

Good question. Apparently, not many. But, that's not unexpected. Most of us would rather discuss waterfowl counts, breeding bird atlasing, and the finer points of warbler IDs than deal with bureaucratic minutiae. Evidence: lack of quorum at most Delegates meetings of the past, lack of feedback this past year, the glazed look on your face now. But.

1. Current society almost demands every member have a voice.
2. New York law requires decision makers be elected.
3. As we enter into contracts and agreements with publishers, government agencies, etc., we should operate consistent with democratic principles within the law.

What Needs Fixing ?

1. A governing body that is elected.
 - retain the five officers, elected statewide
 - elect at-large board member from each *Kingbird* Region, nominated by clubs

- consider abandoning Council of Delegates in favor of a larger Board of Directors
- 2. Enfranchising individual members.
- 3. Revising Bylaws to eliminate inconsistencies and clarify confusing parts.
- 4. Optionally, re-name organization to better reflect emphasis on broader membership: e.g. Federation of New York State Birders

Process:

1. Review this paper with your club, and discuss the issues. Send comments to me by December 15.
2. The Executive Committee meeting in Jan-Feb will be largely devoted to this issue, and a course of action will be decided.
3. The Bylaws Committee will make necessary changes. These will be circulated to member clubs for review.
4. Council of Delegates votes on Bylaws changes.
 - special meeting for the purpose in June, OR
 - mail ballot of delegates, OR
 - Annual Meeting in September at Lake Placid.
5. Ratification by mail ballot of member clubs.

The Alternatives:

1. DO NOTHING.
2. Change the absolutely minimum, to comply with law.
3. Change the structure of the Federation to become more inclusive, particularly of individual members.

With all due respect and admiration for all who have preceded us.

Bob Budliger, President
