South East Volusia Audubon Society

November 9, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Marsha Cox, Bill Cox, Dean Spears, Jane Talbot, Don Chalfont, Gail Rogers, Liz Merachnik, Richard Fosse, Rachel Smith, Mary Schreiber

Agenda Items:

- Treasurer’s Report
- P4B grant/plans
- Field Trip plans
- Welcome new members Liz and Rachel
- Newsletter Kudos
- CBC
- Birds and Brews
- Thursday’s program PUMA plans
- Membership dues/Fund Raising/Farmer’s Market

Thursday’s program PUMA plans
Thursday’s program on Zoom will be on Purple Martins (PUMA) presented by Dr. Anna Forsman from UCF. Presentation will start at 7.

Welcome new members Liz and Rachel
Marsha introduced our new members Liz and Rachel, and asked them and the rest of the attendees to tell a little bit about themselves.

Rachel Smith is the new conservation initiative leadership student. This is a Florida Audubon initiative getting college students involved in consternation. Rachel is a student at UCF studying Environmental Engineering. She enjoys identifying birds, and planted flowers in her yard to attract them. She will be involved with our programs until the end of the SEVAS season (or longer!)

Liz Merachnik owns Green Flamingo Organics farm in Oak Hill. From farming, she developed in interest in ecosystems and how they function. She is not a “birder” but is interested in all parts of what make a bird habitat, and is looking forward to learning about birding from other chapter members.

Mary Schreiber is our newsletter editor. She and her partner John got involved with the group in 2014 when they bought a home in the area. Marsha, John’s sister, and Bill pulled Mary into the group.

Gail Rogers moved to the area from Connecticut 3 years ago, and helps with the plants for birds garden. She is currently rescuing monarch butterflies.

Jane Talbot is the secretary. She is a snowbird, and able to participate remotely in meetings that are on Zoom.

Richard Fosse moved to the area 7 years ago, calls himself a terrible birder. He likes to see birds but can’t identify them. He planted a garden to attract birds last year, but it hasn’t attracted any birds yet!

Don Chalfont is a snowbird who spends 6 months in Ann Arbor MI. He has been coming to the area since the mid-1970’s, and birding since the mid-1980’s. He is an avid lister, has bired all 50 states, and loves to show new birds to others. He is the field trip coordinator and leads field trips.
Dean Spears retired from Delaware to the area 3 years ago and joined SEVAS 2 years ago. He started birding at Lagoonacy. Dean does maintenance at the Plants 4 Birds garden and acts as computer technical support for Marsha and Bill. Dean said the group is warm and welcoming, and always willing to share knowledge.

**Treasurer's Report**

Jenifer was not able to attend the meeting, so Bill provided the report. We have memorial gifts of $1,660. Memorial gifts are used to highlight something meaningful rather than for general expenses. The Domrowski fund was used to by the bench at the garden and walkie talkies to be used for field trips. There is still money from Don Piccard and Nancy White.

Grants: There is $2,072 left in grant money from the 2nd grant (this is matching funds from the city for trees), and there are some unpaid bills coming that will be paid by this. A 3rd grant is coming for $2,500 which is to go into the community, involve the elementary school, and plant small Plants 4 Birds gardens throughout the city. Money will also be used to setup PUMA houses at the Marine Discovery Center.

There is $2,400 in the general fund for expenses.

**Field Trip plans**

Don has developed a tentative list of field trips. Leaders and exact dates are to be determined. He would like to do 3 trips per month for the SEVAS season November – April. The first trip will be on Saturday, November 13th at 8:00, meet at the Marine Discovery Center parking lot in front of the building. A scope will be used and shared. Attendance for this trip will be limited to 10. Suggestions for future trips include dividing the group but using coleaders or using walkie talkies to pass information between the group.

**Newsletter Kudos**

Mary got newsletter out. She forgot to include a table of contents, and asked for feedback. All offered kudos for the newsletter! PUMA article was very interesting.

**CBC**

The Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for January 2nd. Information will be going out soon. Bill and Marsha will setup the areas, but they will be out of town for the count so Jenifer will tally and submit the results. They are looking for additional volunteers. Don suggested publishing area leaders and phone numbers so folks can volunteer for specific areas. Mary will publish information in the January newsletter.

**Action item:** Mary will publish CBC information in the December newsletter

**Birds and Brews**

Marsha and Bill are trying to get a Birds and Brews together for next week. These will be handled separately from regular field trips.

Don suggested adding information about events of interest but not sponsored by SEVAS to the SEVAS newsletter. Examples are the butterfly count at Merritt Island or field trips for neighboring chapters (with permission).

**Action item:** Bill and Marsha will try to put together a Birds and Brews trip for next week.

**Action item:** Mary will publish information on field trips and events of interest in the newsletter.
Membership dues/Fund Raising/Farmer’s Market
Membership dues are used to pay for general expenses. Bylaws require that all paid members can vote, to encourage folks to pay. Jenifer is working on setting up Venmo and Paypal as methods of payment. Encouraging dues paying is challenging while meetings are done remotely. Dues are for 1 year from November to October. Don suggested dues be collected each year on the individual member’s anniversary. Dean commented that this would be an accounting issue, and that the philosophy of dues is to be part of the group and to have a caring attitude for what the group is doing. There is no stigma for non-payment, goal is to be inclusive.

Last year Bill and Marsha had a table at the New Smyrna Beach farmers market in December, selling items to raise money and spreading information to get the word out. They will do this again either the first or second weekend in December. Bill’s sister donated paintings, Dean’s wife donated jewelry, Gail donated lighted bottles, Richard donated bird houses. Anything saleable would be appreciated. Last year we earned $300 at the market. Prices were not marked on the goods, most people paid more than the suggested price.

There is a $1,000 grant for the PUMA houses, but the expected cost is $1,500. We will have to raise money to cover the difference. Richard suggested selling naming rights to the gourds. Marsha found another possible Audubon grant for $2,500. Rachel asked about other fund-raising events, ideas are welcome!

Other news
Liz, Rachel and Marsha are doing a 6-month program on Equity, Diversity and Justice. The program has 7 chapters participating, working together to figure out how to provide more opportunity in the community for equity, diversity and justice. Our chapter was selected in part because we will be working with Chisolm elementary school which as a diverse population. Updates on their studies will be published in the newsletter.

Bill and Marsha attended a meeting of the Southeast Volusia Economic Development committee. They are looking for huge expansions, which will take resources from the ground and air. The group needs to be aware so developers don’t trample the environment.

Meeting minutes submitted by Jane Talbot
Meeting adjourned 5:00