

American Birding Association
Minutes of Annual Membership Meeting
Friday, October 2, 2015
Grange Insurance Audubon Center
505 W. Whittier Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

The annual meeting of the American Birding Association (ABA) was held on Friday, October 2, at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center, 505 W. Whittier St., Columbus Ohio 43215. Approximately 60 people were in attendance, both members and non-members.

In attendance from the Board of Directors – Lou Morrell (Chair), D. H. Michael Bowen, Matthew Fraker, Robin Leong and Terry Rich.

In attendance from the ABA Staff: Jeffrey Gordon (President), George Armistead, John Lowry, Greg Niese, Bill Stewart, Nate Swick and Liz Gordon

Board Chair Morrell called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

Chair Morrell said that as provided for in the Association's bylaws, the Notice and Proxy had been included in the August 2015 issue of "Birding" that had been mailed to ABA members in good standing during the period from August 31, 2015 through September 2, 2015. In addition, the Notice and Proxy was mailed to 40 members who do not receive "Birding" and sent electronically to 45 e-members. Morrell said that also said that the Notice and Proxy had also been posted on the Association's website. He also said that ballots for the election of directors were available at the meeting. The election of Directors would take place later at this meeting.

George Armistead, as attorney and agent for the members represented by proxy reported that 108 valid proxies had been received at ABA headquarters. By a show of hands and signatures on a sign-in sheet, it was determined that among those present at this meeting there were 34 ABA members present at the meeting who had not sent in their proxies. Therefore, 142 members were present either in person or by proxy. The Chair declared that the annual meeting was valid for conducting business since more than the required members were present or represented at the meeting

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Membership Meeting held in Delaware City, DE, on September 21, 2014.

Copies of the draft minutes were available at the door for this meeting. On a motion from the floor, the members voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes, and on a subsequent motion the members present approved unanimously to accept the minutes as presented.

2. Election of Directors

The Chair said it was his sad duty to inform the membership that since the last ABA general membership meeting two members of the Board of Directors had passed away -- John Benzon and Susan Jones. The Board had recently appointed J. Drew Lanham to fill out the remaining portion of Ms. Jones' term, which would have ended as of this meeting. He reported that the unexpired board position of John Benzon remains vacant.

The Chair then announced that in accordance with the ABA's bylaws, the Nominating Committee, chaired by Director Robin Leong, had presented a slate of individuals to be nominated to be Directors of the ABA and that the ABA Board had voted to present the recommended slate to the membership at this meeting. Robin Leong (Vallejo, CA) and John Robinson (Fairfield, CA) had both served two 3-year terms on the Board of Directors and were now nominated for a third (and final) 3-year term; Matthew Fraker (Bloomington, IL) was nominated for a second 3-year term; J. Drew Lanham (Clemson, SC) and Paul Riss (Oshawa, Ontario) were nominated for a first 3-year term. Biographies of all candidates had been provided to members together with the proxy material bound into *Birding* magazine.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the slate of directors as presented to the members. George Armistead and Terry Rich, as attorneys and agents, reported that Leong, Robinson, Fraker and Lanham received 99 for votes by proxy and that; Riss received 98 for votes and 1 against vote by proxy. There were 9 abstentions.

Members present at the meeting were then asked to vote on the slate as a whole rather than separately for each nominee. Members then voted by hand with 23 votes received for the nominees and none against. The rest of members present abstained

The Chair said that as a result of the vote in which each nominee received greater than 85% of votes for, that all five candidates had been elected to the Board of Directors for their respective terms.

Chair Morrell urged the members present to consider making suggestions for future Directors to the Nominating Committee. Candidates with backgrounds in not-for-profit law and not-for-profit accounting would be particularly useful, he said. The permission of the suggested candidates should be secured before making name suggestions to ABA.

Morrell said that ABA had been greatly strengthened in the past year, and he praised President Jeff Gordon for his efforts to make ABA both visible and credible to the birding community. He cautioned, nevertheless, that ABA was not yet "out of the woods" financially and urged all members present to work hard to bring additional members into the fold.

3. President's Report

Jeffrey Gordon noted that it was the fifth anniversary of his taking over as ABA President, coincident with Lou Morrell becoming Chair of the ABA Board of Directors. Jeff reflected on the declining number of ABA members – a decline that started in the early 1990's and that now has stopped, but at a reduced level of approximately 12,000. He stressed the importance of increasing the number of members as a way to strengthen ABA's financial position, which continues to be of concern. He reflected on the many positive changes that have taken place during his Presidency, including expansion of electric and web services, the replacement of the newsletter *Winging It* with a series of attractive *Birders' Guides*, the expansion of programs for Young Birders and the emphasis on other programs for "Conservation and Community." He also noted that ABA was now into the second year of offering for sale the federal "Duck Stamp." Jeff commented on the excellent location of the ABA headquarters in Delaware – close to the nation's capital and to a very large population of birders in the Boston-New York-Washington corridor. He mentioned a successful meeting at the HQ that brought together 50 officers of bird clubs in the New York to Richmond, VA, area, for productive discussions of mutual challenges. Jeff also echoed Chair Morrell's earlier urging of members to work actively to enroll other birders in ABA membership.

4. Financial report

Chair Morrell briefly summarized the ABA's financial position, which is still unsatisfactory, albeit improved. The Association's 2014 federal Form 990 and audited financial statements for 2014 are available to view on the ABA web site ("About the ABA – Financials"). Growth in membership is essential for ABA to avoid running deficits and depleting reserves. During 2014, ABA incurred one-time expenses connected with the move of the headquarters office from Colorado Springs to Delaware City. Lou stressed that 60% of ABA's revenues come from membership dues and member contributions, and pointed out that much of ABA's expenses are related to projects such as Young Birder camps that do not directly benefit members, but are in areas such as conservation and education that members vocally support.

5. Committee reports

Michael Bowen (Chair, Awards Committee) gave a brief account of ABA Awards that either had already been presented or were yet to be presented in 2015, and asked members to consider making nominations for one or more awards for 2016, for which the nominations deadline is December 31, 2015.

Matt Fraker (Chair, Recording Standards and Ethics Committee) summarized the committee's recent activities, which had centered on completion of a revision of ABA's Recording Standards and monitoring the reaction to those revisions by active birders.

Lou Morrell (reporting for Bill Pranty, Chair of the ABA Checklist Committee) noted that some state rare bird committee representatives had taken issue with a decision of the ABA Checklist Committee over the unanimous decision taken by the ABA committee not to accept a species (Hooded Crane) that several state committees had earlier accepted onto their official state checklists. Morrell commented that the Checklist Committee is composed of leading experts in the field and that its deliberations are transparent and open for all to review.

There being no further discussion or questions from the floor, the meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.