



BRAW BOARD MEETING MINUTES
March 6, 2021
Online

Officers/Directors Present: Steve Sample, Pat Ready, Gene Kroupa, Dan Schroeder, David Lucey, Steve Fallon, Mary Sobol, Kris Perlberg and Mike Crawford

Others Present: Val Van Winkle

1. **Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order by Acting President Steve Sample at 9:10 a.m.
2. **Roll Call.** Roll call was taken and we had a quorum.
3. **Changes to Agenda.** The item related to webmaster was deleted. A report from the Promotions/PR Committee was added to the list of reports to be given.
4. **Minutes.** The minutes of the board meeting held on December 5, 2020 were approved on a motion made by Dave Lucey and seconded by Pat Ready.
5. **Recognition of Past President.** By unanimous consent the board expressed its appreciation for Patrick Ready's six years of outstanding service as president.
6. **Induction of New President.** On a motion by Steve Fallon and seconded by Dave Lucey, the board unanimously approved the elevation of Vice President Steve Sample to President.
7. **Officers' Reports.** The following officers reports were given:
 - a. **Treasurer's Report.** Dan Schroeder reported revenues continue to exceed expenses, primarily due to increased memberships and lower expenditures related to Covid 19 restrictions on activities. On a motion by Steve Sample and seconded by Gene Kroupa, the treasurer's report was accepted.
 - b. **Communications to the President.** Steve Sample noted that the River Valley Raptors are seeking house sparrows for feeding its raptors. The Madison Remodeling & Home Improvement Show would like BRAW to be an exhibitor. The Lussier Family Heritage Center is seeking speakers for its evening series starting in June. Mike Crawford volunteered to help with the speakers series.
8. **Committee Reports.** The following reports were given:
 - a. **Website.** Andy Garcia-Rivera was not able to attend. However, it was suggested that the 35th anniversary logo be used on the BRAW store page.
 - b. **2020 Data Summary.** Steve Fallon noted that reports are still coming in, including some significant ones that have pushed total bluebirds fledged for 2020 to over 20,000.

- c. **WB Editor.** Pat Ready said he plans to include articles about oldtimers in future issues as part of coverage of BRAW's 35th anniversary. The spring issue has been printed and mailed.
- d. **Membership.** Val Van Winkle note that memberships continue to come in and that BRAW is on track to have a good recruitment and retention year. More members are paying for multiple years dues as a convenience. One-third of Garden Expo special \$10 memberships have renewed so far. Each quarter past due members are notified in a special mailing using Kris Perlberg's design. Thanks to Steve Sample for copying and mailing the letters. So far, three of seven Trail Builder new members have contributed to help cover box shipping expenses.
- e. **County Coordinators.** Gene Birr was unable to attend but noted that he is trying to get someone to consider joining the board.
- f. **Nest Box Coordinator.** There was discussion about the need to have a nest box coordinator. Although the Peterson, NABS and Simple style boxes each has advantages and limitations, Pat Ready noted that some DIYs prefer the more complex Peterson design as a challenge. No decision was made.
- g. **Youth Outreach.** Lowell Peterson and Mary Hollebeck might be holding future sessions, including one at River Edge Nature Center, if Covid 19 related restrictions are eased. Sample sent membership sign-up and information materials to Hollebeck to use if they are able to hold sessions. Ready noted that he was contacted by a Montello school teacher who saw the WSO article and is interested in learning how to engage students in helping birds. This is the second request received as a result of the WSO article.
- h. **WDNR Liaison.** Sample contacted Sumner Matteson and he expects support and cooperation as a result.
- i. **Technology.** Crawford pointed out the need to embrace technology. He outlined the pros and cons of ZOOM options for future board meeting and seminars to engage members. Seminars can be taped and posted on our website. Following discussion, on a motion by Pat Ready and seconded by Steve Fallon the board approved starting with the ZOOM Pro Meeting option at an annual fee of \$150 prior to the June board meeting. As needs are better identified, then the board recommends signing up for the \$400 seminar hosting option.
- j. **Public Relations/Promotions.** Kroupa recapped PR and promotion efforts, including recent articles in the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology and NABS March newsletters. He is also working with the Horicon Nature Marsh Education & Visitors Center's wildlife educator to get an article distributed via the DNR's press service. Also, Lucey is preparing an article for the Prairie Enthusiasts' May newsletter. The current Trail Builder program is supported by an ad that Perlberg designed. Crawford noted that when writing about prairies to note that while not a "preferred habitat" bluebirds will use nest boxes places in and near them. Kroupa also mentioned the possibility of a "Put Your Guard Up" promotion for the summer months to encourage the use of predator guards.

9. **Old Business.** The board addressed the following items:

- a. **Posting WB Issues on Website.** To clarify a past decision to post back WB issues on the website, the board decided that all issues except the most current quarterly one should be posted.
- b. **Posting the Information Packet.** After discussion, the board approved on a motion by Dave Lucey and seconded by Pat Ready to post the information packet on the website. As Fallon noted, it is part of BRAW's mission to get out information to anyone who needs it to help bluebirds. Ready agreed. Perlberg noted that when posted the packet should be easy to use.
- c. **Lifetime Memberships.** As Lucey pointed out, Lifetime Membership dues are high enough to provide adequate income over the years and saves having to ask the member to renew each year. Decision by the board was to leave this membership option unchanged.
- d. **Payment for Nest Boxes.** The board approved paying Steve Lang for the nest boxes with predator guards and clamps starting this year. Although he would prefer getting paid immediately when BRAW takes delivery, the treasurer will continue to issue a check after delivery.
- e. **Historical Files & History.** The board agreed it would be good to find someone who could organize materials and document the history of BRAW. Sample will look into options.
- f. **Fill VP Position.** There being no immediate urgency, further discussion was slated for the next board meeting.
- g. **Review Strategic & Marketing Plans.** The board had no suggested changes to either plan.

10. **New Business.** The board addressed the following items:

- a. **Research Proposals.** The board considered two research proposals from Dr. Memuna Kahn, Associate Professor, Ripon College: 1) Do Skylight boxes reduce the need for aggressive house sparrow management, and 2) Do wren guards prevent house wren nest-destroying behavior? After a thorough review and discussion of potentially funding these projects in 2021, the board decided to have Kroupa follow-up with the professor to determine:
 - Whether a pilot study related to deterring house sparrows could be conducted this year in preparation for a scaled up effort next year, and
 - If the wren study could be increased in size to better determine efficacy of various deterrents now available.

In addition, Sample will get Gene Birr's feedback related to the skylight proposal's requirements for nest boxes and member participation in monitoring.

- b. **Sharing Nest Box Data.** Following discussion about sharing nest box data with WSO, Cornell Lab and NABS, the board decided to start out by having Fallon post the 2020 monitoring results by county on the Ebird site. Then they would be available to any organizations that could use them.

- c. **Paid Advertising & News Releases.** Kroupa suggested running the ad about the nest box offer for new members in *Wisconsin Outdoor News* – a publication reaching 50,000 paid subscribers at a cost of \$360 for a color ad. Also, he would like to pay the Wisconsin Newspaper Association to distribute a news release about BRAW’s 35th anniversary and nest box data at a cost of \$100 to reach over 200 newspapers and the follow-up clipping service. The board agreed to spending the funds for both items.
 - d. **Put Up Your Guard.** Discussion about this promotion focused on shipping challenges. Mary Sobol noted that the offer should be for 5 or 10 Noel style predator guards so BRAW doesn’t get hit with unusually large orders. Ready said that the guards could be flattened for shipment. Sobol will check with Steve Lang about what he would charge us for the guards. No final decision made on doing the promotion.
 - e. **FSA CRP Rule about Structures.** Sample said he has sent a letter to Senator Tammy Baldwin requesting her help in getting the USDA’s Farm Services Administration to allow bluebird nest boxes be placed on Conservation Reserve Program lands. Currently all “structures” are prohibited.
 - f. **Candidates for the Board.** Sample suggested getting more board members from other parts of the state. Ready has one person in mind for SE Wisconsin. Use of ZOOM for meetings should make recruitment somewhat easier as no travel would be necessary.
 - g. **Fall Convention.** Crawford suggested holding a Q & A session online in lieu of a physical meeting. Bluebird experts would be available to answer questions that members might pose. Kroupa added that this might be done on a regional basis.
- 11. Next Meeting.** The next board meeting will be June 5, 2021 online with a start time of 9:00 a.m.
- 12. Adjournment.** The board unanimously approved a motion by Kris Perlberg and seconded by Mike Crawford to adjourn at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gene Kroupa, Secretary