

Ft. Davis Board Retreat
The Nature Conservancy
August 18-21, 2022

Friday, August 19, 2022

Present at today's board meeting were Laura Wilson, Byron Stone, John Berner, Kendra Kocab, D D Currie, Randy Pinkston, Susan Foster, Clay Taylor, Romey Swanson, and Gailon Brehm. Not present were Frances Cerbins and Christine Turnbull. The meeting was called to order by president, Byron Stone, at 2:00 p.m.

Laura Wilson moved to approve minutes from the May meeting in Lake Jackson. Seconded by Kendra Kocab. All in favor. Motion passed.

Membership Committee:

Laura Wilson sponsored ten college students for membership in TOS. Our current membership is approximately 900. Meetings and weekenders help in attracting and retaining members. Cost is reasonable. Offered to members only. Laura Wilson talked about directors each holding a weekender in their region. Clay Taylor talked about private ranches in West Texas. Kendra Kocab talked about Pan Handle in Spring. Gailon Brehm said that he thinks Anthony might be interested in doing a weekender. Kendra Kocab thinks that weekenders help with membership retention.

Raptor and other classes:

Byron talked about Bill Clark's raptor class. Bill Clark still wants to work with us to do a class in Corpus Christi the third weekend of September. Ideas for future classes include hummingbirds, flycatchers, shorebirds, gulls, and sparrows. John will check with Cin-Ty Lee on flycatchers.

Financials:

John Berner presented TOS' profit and loss YTD comparison through August 16, 2022. Discussed Panama trip money. Clay Taylor suggested that instead of a refund for those who must back out, maybe we could give a deal on a future trip. TOS is making \$600 per person profit. Trip insurance may take care of refunds? Final payment has already been paid to the Canopy Tower. Nine people are committed to go. Deposit is non-refundable. Gailon Brehm suggested checking into it and seeing if we can give any type of refund. Romey suggested that we have a policy that we make clear for future trips. Clay Taylor suggested talking to Carlos at Canopy Tower. They might have a way

to fill slots of cancellations. Clay Taylor said he can put together a Costa Rica trip easily. Also, we have an offer from JB Journeys out of Austin to do a trip to Guatemala.

Sanctuaries:

Sabine Woods collections doubled from last year. The QR code and more people getting outside contributed to the increase. The QR Code is also successful at Hooks Woods.

John Berner reported that Sabine Woods has nine acres next to it available to lease. He will meet on August 24 regarding the lease and will get more information. Suggest at least a two year term. Nominal fee for the lease.

Magic Ridge - Byron Stone reported a reconnaissance day on September 10 and clean up on October 8.

Hooks Woods - approval of a list of remaining grant money for other projects. The bamboo problem there continues.

Meeting Committee:

Byron passed out copies of TOS Meeting Responsibilities, TOS Membership Meeting Policy, and TOS Meeting Planning documents that were put together in 2018. Christine Turnbull is in touch with Jay Packer who said he will put together the winter meeting in Abilene but said we need to provide guides. Clay Taylor suggested looking at the Central Valley Bird Symposium for ideas. What do we want at this meeting? Always do a photo session. Do we want afternoon speakers? Suggestion by Kendra Kocab that we don't have a banquet. We could get a room at a restaurant or bar nearby. DD Currie contacted Jay Packer regarding his availability for the winter meeting. Christine Turnbull agreed to chair the January meeting.

We next discussed locations for the Spring Meeting. The Central Texas coast was suggested for migration. However, Corpus Christi has the Birdiest Festival. We could do a piggyback festival. TOS might just do Century Club trips. The dates are April 29-30. Also discussed as possible locations were the Valley and South Padre Island. Romey Swanson says Audubon Texas could get involved to promote Sabal Palm. Could partner with one of the Audubon chapters. Beaumont is interested in having us. Hill Country? Uvalde? There is an Agrilife Office there. Val Verde County? Del Rio? After some discussion, we decided that our first choice is Corpus Christi and our second choice is the Valley.

The newly designed t-shirt sales are going well. Daniel Hodges runs our TOS store.

The TOS webpage has been redesigned. Directors need to send a description of their region along with favorite places to bird in that region to Shelia Hargis by August 26.

Planning for the future:

Discussed transitioning from an all-volunteer board to staff-run. Discussed benefits of hiring an executive director or an administrative assistant who would put on two meetings per year, weekenders, organize support volunteers for sanctuaries, and promote TOS on social media. Clay Taylor said we should continue to focus on tours since they are money makers. Byron Stone thinks that \$55,000 per year salary for a full time director plus benefits would be reasonable. Gailon Brehm estimates \$70,000. Kendra has seen salaries over \$100,000. We need someone to help us with our vision. More members, more funding. John Berner thinks we don't need a full time director. Byron Stone thinks we leave a lot on the table. Romey Swanson agreed with needing only an administrator as did Susan Foster. Don't want to draw down limited funds. Byron Stone added that a trip to Panama or elsewhere a couple times a year can help raise money to cover the person's salary.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Meeting reconvened at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, August 20.

President, Byron Stone, suggested giving a donation to The Nature Conservancy. Board members were also encouraged to send in private donations. It was decided that we would donate \$500. Susan Foster moved that we donate \$500 to TNC. Seconded by Laura Wilson. Motion carried.

Discussed Mission Capital training for board members for nonprofit organizations.

Continued discussion about winter and spring meetings. Possible joint meeting with the Corpus Christi Birdiest Festival. Byron Stone said that we must have a profit. Clay Taylor will talk to Joel Simon to see if they are interested. Plan A is Corpus Christi. Plan B is the Valley. Arroyo Colorado, Brownsville Sabal Palm. Audubon Texas' Romey Swanson will look into Valley possibilities. Clay Taylor suggested looking into using Magic Ridge, but that property is not yet ready for a meeting.

What is our mission? Purpose is listed on our TOS website. Discussed the name Texas Ornithological Society, which confuses some nonmembers. The name can make recruiting new members a problem. The word "Society" can be confusing. We

discussed using the letters TOS with a tag line such as TOS, Birding Texas. We don't want to change the name but we do need to market better to attract new members. Can plug this into the new website redesign. Our purpose is "to study, observe, conserve, and enjoy birds in Texas." We will be holding more meetings, classes, and field trips, which is what a member survey revealed is what our membership wants.

If we hire somebody, what would we need them for? Discussed what we need and want. Does the person need meeting planning experience? DD said we need worker bees. Leave vision and goals to the board. We want someone to be the face of the organization. A person to come up with ideas and execute them. Figure out how to generate revenue. Kendra Kocab suggested hiring a worker with innate skills with little or no experience. Meeting planning, organizational skills, social media skills, some money management skills and nature oriented. Romey Swanson said we need an administrative assistant. Clay suggested a travel agent.

The board approved formation of a search committee for an administrative assistant or staff person. The Executive Committee plus Shelia Hargis are willing to serve on this committee. Byron Stone would like for the board to develop a search description and report back to the board.

Romey Swanson moved to establish a due diligence committee that includes some sort of finance plan to fund this person. Seconded by Clay. Discussion. Gailon Brehm suggested a deep dive into documents as to what can be done. Volunteered to serve on the committee. Byron Stone made a friendly amendment to Romey Swanson's motion. Due diligence for the proposal of hiring staff for TOS. Randy Pinkston suggested a consultant to take care of meetings. All in favor. Motion passed. DD Curry suggested that TOS needs to provide technology for this person such as a laptop and wifi.

The next board meeting, hopefully by Zoom, will be October 13 at 6:30 p.m. During the January 13, 14, and 15 Abilene meeting, we will move the board meeting from Thursday to Friday at 3:00 p.m. Discussed that possible future trips to Panama and Costa Rica will require two vaccines and the most recent booster.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.