

REFORM GROUP FALLS SHORT IN NAS PROXY CHALLENGE

Darrel Whipple

Editor's note: As most of you know, the November issue of the *Skimmer* contained a proxy in support of Take Back Audubon. Darrel Whipple, a TBA candidate, wrote that:

A proxy challenge mounted by a reform group within the National Audubon Society brought some tension to an otherwise business-as-usual Annual Meeting of Members on December 6th, 2003, in Erlanger, Kentucky.

The group of local Audubon chapter leaders from more than 50 chapters across the country calls itself Take Back Audubon and aims to "restore a true partnership between the independent chapters and the National Audubon Society through a real voice in the NAS organization and in all decisions that affect chapters." TBA leaders claim that the organization pays little heed to chapter concerns. They say they are offended that NAS holds noncompetitive elections for its Board of Directors and that NAS has discontinued sharing some \$1.8 million in member dues with the 500 local chapters.



The dissidents appeared with over 3,200 proxies, but in a showdown on TBA's motion to have the meeting governed by Robert's Rules of Order, the newly appointed Chairman of the Board Carol Browner and CEO John Flicker voted 37,000 proxies against, and the proposal was defeated.

The election of directors to fill 12 positions on the 36-member board followed a similar pattern, with Flicker voting the 37,000 proxies for the Nominating Committee's nine candidates for at-large positions, and with Gallagher voting 3,200 proxies for TBA's slate of nine candidates, but with both camps voting for the same three regionally nominated [i.e., chapter-nominated] representatives.

The TBA leaders later argued for a resolution to reinstate the dues share to chapters, a resolution to require competitive elections for the Board of Directors, and resolutions to provide for initiative measures, congresses of chapters, and "access to basic information."

Chairman Browner asked if these were the same five resolutions the Board of Directors agreed to refer to committees at the September Board meeting in Los Angeles. Taken aback, Darrel Whipple replied that he had attended the LA meeting but did not learn of any such action by the Board [these resolutions had been voted down without referral at the no-TBA-proxy 2002 Annual Meeting]. The TBA group then agreed with Carol Browner's suggestion to refer the current versions of the resolutions to the appropriate committees, rather than force an up-or-down proxy vote on each one with no hope of success. The motion for referral, with a guarantee of regular status reports, passed unanimously. (Whipple later learned from Board member Charlie Kahle that the action by the Board in Los Angeles was taken in a closed session.)

TBA leaders indicated they would continue to claim for chapters what they perceive as the chapters' rightful share of member dues, and to press for more democratic election procedures for the organization and more openness and respect for dissent at all NAS meetings. They did not rule out another proxy challenge in 2004.

IN MEMORY OF SALLY POPKIN

Elliott Kutner recently received the following letter from Dr. and Mrs. Herbert Perr. Sally Popkin was the widow of SSAS's former treasurer, and donated dozens of nature books and other items to us last year. We thank the Perrs for their letter and their donation.

Dear Mr. Kutner,

We are enclosing a check to the South Shore Audubon Society in memory of our good friend Sally Popkin. She and George enhanced our lives, and among many shared pursuits, introduced us to bird watching.

We can think of no better way to keep their memory alive than to support the society which they so deeply cared about.

NEWSLETTER DRIVERS NEEDED

SSAS can always use more volunteers. For example, if you are available Monday mornings (7:30-10 A.M.) or Friday afternoons (before 5 P.M.), you could visit our printer in Island Park, a few minutes north of Long Beach. Please call Mike Sperling at 541-0805 (evenings).



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AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

WINTER WILDLIFE WORKSHOP (Sun., Feb. 8). Meet 11 A.M. at Jamaica Bay Refuge visitor center. Slide program on how plants and animals adapt to winter. Hike to look for waterfowl, owls & other raptors, finches, and signs of mammals, insects, other wildlife. Call leader Don to reserve. Free.

EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS (Sun., March 28). Meet 11 A.M. at Jamaica Bay Refuge visitor center. Slide program on signs of early spring, followed by hike to look for phoebes, oyster-catchers, egrets, ibis, osprey, and other early returning birds. Call leader Don to reserve. Free.

NEW YORK AQUARIUM (Sat., April 3). Meet 10 A.M. at entrance for a 2-1/2 hour "Behind-the-Scenes" tour of indoor/outdoor exhibits. See sea otters, walrus, penguins, sharks, beluga whales, local & tropical fishes, and, of course, "Squirt, the Wonder Clam." Cost: \$15 (kids \$10). Call Don.

ASSATEAGUE WEEKEND (May 20-23). Hike Chincoteague Wildlife Refuge trails and Assateague National Seashore beaches during peak spring bird migration. See nesting eagles & osprey, butterflies, Sika deer, river otter, red fox, Chincoteague ponies. Cost: \$325 includes inn, marsh boat tour, bus tour, etc.

JAMAICA BAY SUNSET CRUISES (May 29 and June 12).

For information and free field trip newsletter, call/write Don Riepe, (718) 318-9344, donriepe@aol.com, 28 West 9th Road, Broad Channel, NY 11693; www.alsnyc.org

South Shore Audubon Society
P.O. Box 31
Freeport, NY 11520-0031

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
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BECOME A MEMBER OF SSAS
Think Globally, but Join Locally!

Option 1. You can join SSAS for a year by sending \$15 payable to **South Shore Audubon Society** using the form below. Our address is P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031.

Option 2. If you'd like to become a member of National Audubon and your all-volunteer local chapter, you can help SSAS survive NAS's major dues share cutbacks (we now get \$0 for renewals) by joining Audubon through us for the same price that it costs if you join through NAS (we get a first-year dues share only if you join through us). Please mail the form below and your check payable to **National Audubon Society** to SSAS at the address above. The special rate for the first year is \$20 per household; \$15 for students and seniors. Gift memberships help too; we will ask that non-local recipients be assigned to their own local chapter if requested.

Renewing? Please send NAS renewals directly to NAS.



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