

Implementing the AOU Strategic Plan

The AOU Action Plan - 2006

Introduction

The Strategic Plan of the American Ornithologists' Union, *AOU Future Directions*, recognizes six priority goals as well as several objectives related to each of the goals. The Plan calls for these goals and objectives to be realized over the next 5 years. The AOU's Strategic Goals are to:

- 1. Improve scientific publications**
- 2. Improve annual meetings**
- 3. Strengthen basic and applied ornithological science**
- 4. Increase outreach**
- 5. Maintain a strong and active membership**
- 6. Improve business management and governance**

To implement the AOU's Strategic Plan, the Council has recognized the following actions to be undertaken during 2006 – 2010.

Goal 1. Improve scientific publications

1.1. Increase effectiveness of editorial management

- 1.1.1. Follow professional business plan for management of the AOU publication office
- 1.1.2. Evaluate alternative options for managing AOU publications
- 1.1.3. Align publication prices and institutional subscriptions to market levels
- 1.1.4. Improve management of *The Auk* and *Ornithological Monographs* subscriptions
- 1.1.5. Improve online publication ordering and fulfillment
- 1.1.6. Increase marketing and sales of *Ornithological Monographs*
- 1.1.7. Eliminate inventories of old *Ornithological Monographs* and put on line
- 1.1.8. Explore sales opportunities for publications through new outlets and marketing

1.2. Develop a full range of electronic opportunities

- 1.2.1. Provide *The Auk* and *Ornithological Monographs* to members online
- 1.2.2. Evaluate establishing expanded content for *The Auk* online
- 1.2.3. Make BNA Online available to AOU members at low or no cost
- 1.2.4. Explore opportunities to provide other publications on line for members

1.3 Assess the impact of our publications

- 1.3.1. Increase impact of publications through such means as to decreasing time to publication,

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increasing on-line availability, and increasing citation power

1.4. Increase quality, quantity, breadth, dissemination

- 1.4.1. Continuously evaluate manuscript review process, including turnover time, electronic submission, and electronic review process
- 1.4.2. Provide training for reviewers
- 1.4.3. Continue to reduce time to publication
- 1.4.4. Develop processes for AOU to participate in scientific oversight of BNA Online
- 1.4.5. Develop additional opportunities for co-publishing with other organizations
- 1.4.6. Finalize partnership with Nuttall Ornithological Club for publishing book-length series
- 1.4.7. Ensure that AOU publications available to the public are linked with appropriate websites, nationally and internationally
- 1.4.8. Review options to increase size of *The Auk*, without increasing costs to members

Goal 2. Improve annual meetings

2.1. Increase effectiveness of dissemination of scientific information

2.2. Increase opportunities for peer interaction and professional development

2.3. Increase efficiency of meetings management

- 2.3.1. Manage meeting finances within the AOU annual operating budget
- 2.3.2. Enlist professional organizers to manage meetings without increasing costs to participants
- 2.3.3. Manage meetings to generate a profit to the AOU, without increasing costs to participants
- 2.3.4. Make the Committee on Special Affairs (Future Meetings) a standing committee
- 2.3.5. Consider options for achieving strategic objectives for meetings
- 2.3.6. Create and maintain a meeting handbook that specifies meeting objectives

2.4. Increase accessibility of meetings

Goal 3. Strengthen basic science and applied ornithological science

3.1. Enhance resources for ornithological research

- 3.1.1. Increase availability of external funds for ornithological research
- 3.1.2. Increase endowment in support of AOU research activities
- 3.1.3. Encourage increased support for bird collections and museums

3.2. Increase interaction between ornithology and other disciplines

- 3.2.1. Increase disciplinary diversity of papers presented at annual meetings

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- 3.2.2. Develop mechanisms to maintain or increase participation by diverse disciplines in the annual meeting

3.3. Improve opportunities for training

- 3.3.1. Explore means of identifying and promoting emerging questions in ornithology
- 3.3.2. Develop workshops and short courses to be held at annual meetings

3.4. Promote a rigorous scientific basis for bird conservation

- 3.4.1. Continue to provide conservation White Papers through the Committee on Conservation
- 3.4.2. Evaluate and increase effectiveness dissemination of White Papers
- 3.4.3. Develop processes for providing AOU input and support on conservation issues affecting birds
- 3.3.4. Secure funding for the new AOU Conservation Award

3.5. Improve and expand international scientific partnerships

- 3.5.1. Strengthen processes for AOU's engagement in the IOC and NAOC
- 3.5.2. Institute grants to support national and regional ornithological societies in Latin America
- 3.5.3. Explore mechanisms to more effectively partner with Latin American ornithological societies

Goal 4. Increase outreach

4.1. Increase public awareness of ornithology

- 4.1.1. Develop capacity to respond to questions about ornithology
- 4.1.2. Explore establishing a relationship with American Birding Association
- 4.1.3. Provide non-technical summaries of ornithological research or current controversies for the AOU website
- 4.1.4. Establish process to create press coverage of annual meetings

4.2. Facilitate engagement in ornithological education

- 4.2.1. Explore promotion of short-courses in conjunction with meetings
- 4.2.2. Establish education resources page on website

4.3. Increase influence on public policy issues affecting ornithology

- 4.3.1. Annually determine and implement AOU priorities in public affairs
- 4.3.2. Develop processes for AOU to endorse specific public policy initiatives

Goal 5. Maintain a strong and active membership

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5.1. Expand and diversify the membership

- 5.1.1. Evaluate member wants and needs at regular intervals
- 5.1.2. Attract to AOU membership non-ornithologists who use birds in their research
- 5.1.3. Evaluate possibility of disciplinary sections within the AOU, including Journal sections
- 5.1.4. Improve mechanisms and increase value of internal communications to members
- 5.1.5. Create an AOU newsletter

5.2. Evaluate membership categories

- 5.2.1. Restructure method of nominating Elective Members
- 5.2.2. Continue to consolidate and simplify dues structure
- 5.2.3. Evaluate costs and benefits provided to non dues paying members
- 5.2.4. Combine categories of Honorary Fellow and Corresponding Fellow and provide only electronic publications to all nonpaying members

5.3. Improve membership list management

- 5.3.1. Better manage membership list functions
- 5.3.2. Better manage communications with members
- 5.3.3. Better respond to member complaints

5.4. Provide specific benefits to targeted membership groups

- 5.4.1. Evaluate and implement targeted benefits for students
- 5.4.2. Evaluate and implement targeted benefits for young professionals
- 5.4.3. Evaluate and implement targeted benefits for undergraduate teachers
- 5.4.4. Evaluate and implement targeted benefits for interdisciplinary fields, especially conservation biologists
- 5.4.5. Evaluate and improve benefits for Fellows and Elective Members
- 5.4.6. Determine special needs of senior members
- 5.1.7. Institute Presidential awards for service to AOU
- 5.1.8. Continue to recognize major accomplishments in ornithology through award programs and other methods

5.5. Improve communication with members

- 5.5.1. Establish position of Editor of the website
- 5.5.2. Establish full array of online membership functions on the website
- 5.5.3. Enhance ability of website visitors to make online purchases
- 5.5.4. Develop members' only section of website that adds value to membership
- 5.5.5. Increase opportunities for using AOU website and list-servers for communications among members
- 5.5.6. Consider options to use website to be of service to members in Latin America

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5.6. Increase opportunities for member participation in affairs of the society

Goal 6. Improve business management and governance

6.1. Increase effectiveness of the executive and business functions

- 6.1.1. Improve effectiveness of AOU administrative management
- 6.1.2. Define role and function of Executive Director, perhaps in policy manual
- 6.1.3. Employ a full time Executive Director to manage all administrative functions
- 6.1.4. Develop policy manual including standard operating procedures for all recurring activities

6.2. Improve marketing and business management of publications

- 6.2.1. Develop full fiscal management of publication expenses
- 6.2.2. Develop proposals for alternative approaches to managing publications in the future
- 6.2.3. Create a marketing program for the existing publications

6.3. Review and refine existing partnerships to meet strategic goals

- 6.3.1. Examine existing partnerships with respect to strategic goals
- 6.3.2. Organize a strategic meeting of Presidents of ornithological societies at NAOC

6.4. Achieve priority-based budgeting and improve fiscal management and oversight

- 6.4.1. Fully implement change to January-December fiscal year
- 6.4.2. Operationalize Committee on Finance
- 6.4.3. Assume full fiscal management of meetings
- 6.4.4. Develop monthly financial tracking systems
- 6.4.5. Revamp budget to support organizational priorities

6.5. Increase revenue, including annual and planned giving

- 6.5.1. Review dues and connect dues to a better-defined benefit package
- 6.5.2. Increase number of and retention of new members
- 6.5.3. Eliminate non dues-paying membership categories or reduce benefits
- 6.5.4. Increase and maintain institutional subscription rate at market levels
- 6.5.5. Provide means of electronic access to publications that does not erode the subscription or membership base
- 6.5.6. Increase advertising revenue
- 6.5.7. Maintain page charge income
- 6.5.8. Increase sales of publications, especially via internet.
- 6.5.9. Better market *Ornithological Monographs* and other publications
- 6.5.10. Increase AOU's profits from meetings
- 6.5.11. Increase levels of endowment and annual giving.

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- 6.5.12. Continue and improve annual campaign
- 6.5.13. Develop planned giving program
- 6.5.14. Complete establishment of Committee on Development
- 6.5.15. Maintain giving-category lists and develop benefit packages for major donors
- 6.5.16. Decrease administrative operating expenses through efficiencies.

6.6. Review and improve the governance system

- 6.6.1. Eliminate office of Vice-President
- 6.6.2. Open opportunity for election to Council to all paid member categories
- 6.6.3. Define voting members of Council as Officers and Elective Councilors
- 6.6.4. Hold Officer and Council elections by mail / email ballot of members, with nominations controlled by the Committee on Nominations
- 6.6.5. Develop codes of conduct for council members and meetings
- 6.6.6. Develop orientation program for new Elective Councilors
- 6.6.7. Initiate twice-yearly Council meetings
- 6.6.8. Increase use of electronic communication by Council
- 6.6.9. Describe and circumscribe Executive Committee function
- 6.6.10. Increase the number of Elective Councilors in each cohort from 3 to 4
- 6.6.11. Change by law approval to be voted upon by all members