

BCN Quarterly Meeting—Minutes  
Northbrook Public Library, Northbrook, IL  
November 3, 2007

Attendees: Bobbi Asher, **CAS**; Annette Prince, Mary Lou Mellon, Teri Radke, **CBCM**; Sigrid Schmidt, **COS**; Glenn Gabanski, Bob Fisher, **DBC**; Suzanne Checchia, **ENSBC**; Dawn Keller, **Flint Creek**; Wayne Svoboda, **Ft. Dearborn**; Mary Anne Harrison, **IAS**; Joan Bruchman, **IOS**; Jean Sodemann, Nancy Greenlee, **Lake-Cook**; Diane Rosenberg, **Lake County Audubon**; Kim Ramirez, **Midewin Alliance**; Judy Pollack, Lee Ramsey, **NAS-CW**; Dick Riner, **Thorn Creek Audubon**; Donnie Dann, **TNC**

President Dick Riner called the meeting to order at 1:02pm.

A quorum was established, with 20 representatives from 15 member groups present.

**1. Olympics-- Lake County Equestrian Venues:** Guest speakers Andy Kimmel, Deputy Executive Director of the Lake County Forest Preserve, and Anne Bassi, Lake County Commissioner, presented a slide show and described the possible locations in Lake County for the 2016 Olympics equestrian venue, which requires 300 acres. Gary Glowacki, Lake County wildlife biologist, also attended. Kimmel presented the thinking behind Lakewood and Raven Glen. He emphasized that, whichever site is selected, environmental sensitivity is foremost in the LCFPD's thinking. Raven Glen would use less Forest Preserve land, because in order to total 300 acres Abbott Labs has offered use of its adjacent land for temporary facilities. No spectator parking is planned onsite for either location. DuPage County also has some locations that are under consideration. A key point for LCFPD seems to be the "public legacy" left behind after the Olympics, which is likely to be desperately needed water and sewer service, among other things.

## **Administrative**

**2. Meeting minutes:** The July 21, 2007, Quarterly Meeting minutes were approved as written by voice vote and are posted on the BCN website at [www.bcnbirds.org](http://www.bcnbirds.org).

**3. Treasurer's report:** Glenn Gabanski

The financial report of 11/1/07 was distributed. Glenn reported that at present BCN has \$4,152.95. The Executive Committee authorized addition of \$500 to the CD that matured, so that is now totals \$3000; it was rolled over and will now mature in June 2008. It will yield approximately \$95 to 2008 income.

Glenn will file the tax return for 2008, so the club will have no CPA fees for 2007.

BCN received a donation of \$500 from Arlene and Jeff Koziol and expressed great appreciation. The Executive Committee decided to add \$100 of BCN funds and to split the money equally between Mary Hennen's Chicago Peregrine Project and the American Bird Conservancy's project in support of the Cerulean Warbler Reserves in Colombia,

S.A. The Cerulean Warbler is North America's fastest declining neotropical songbird, primarily due to the rapid destruction of its winter habitat.

## Projects / Initiatives

**4. Wooded Island:** Joan Bruchman read the statement of support that she drafted after she and Dick attended a meeting regarding the restoration of Wooded Island (Appendix 1). The Executive Committee had determined that BCN should support this effort. The membership present ratified the ExCom's decision and the support statement.

**5. TNR (Trap, Neuter, Release) Feral Cats:** Past President Donnie Dann read the National Wildlife Federation's 2006 resolution regarding feral cat colonies and also circulated copies of an ABC article titled "*Managed*" *Cat Colonies--The Wrong Solution to a Tragic Problem*. Cook County managed to pass an ordinance supporting feral cat colonies, which are a major health hazard to humans in addition to being a disaster for birds and other wild life. The environmental community had little fore-knowledge of this pending legislation. Donnie was appointed BCN point man for this project. He has upcoming meetings with various public officials and will then recommend how BCN should proceed. Meanwhile a draft of a letter for Chicago-residing individuals to mail to their aldermen was passed out. (Appendix 2) Individuals were encouraged to send letters written in their own words.

A question was posed as to how many birds outdoor cats kill. Subsequent to the meeting, Judy Pollock provided the following answer:

Several oft-cited studies form the basis for an estimate of 100 million to 1 billion U.S. songbirds killed annually by domestic cats. One study, from the University of Wisconsin, finds that a reasonable estimate is 39 million birds killed by cats each year -- in Wisconsin alone. Here's a dramatic quote from the same study: "Worldwide, cats may have been involved in the extinction of more bird species than any other cause, except habitat destruction." The University of Florida Conservation Clinic, in a report to the Fish and Wildlife Service, estimated that a free-roaming cat kills 100 mammals and birds per year.

**6. Shrubland Bird Blitz, etc.:** Judy Pollock. The Shrubland Bird Blitz had good participation. The data are still being analyzed.

Illinois has just added 21 new Important Bird Areas (IBAs) making a total of 69 in the state. Judy is working on a press release and a way to announce these with a flourish.

Judy's Shrubland Green Paper is a work in progress.

Openlands' position re the Olympics was passed out and Judy asked BCN members whether they would like to approve it or an amended version. Suggestions were made to remove the statement of strong support for the Olympics and to insert language about the importance of bird habitat. Members were asked to email their thoughts to Judy at

[jpollock@audubon.org](mailto:jpollock@audubon.org) by 1/14/08 and she will prepare a draft BCN position for members to review at the January 19, 2008, meeting.

Lost Mound (the former Savannah Army Depot) is in need of a boost. Judy suggested that Illinois birders could “give back” by contributing a workday to help get this amazing place back in shape. The idea was well received.

**7. Chicago Wilderness Grant Update:** Glenn. Unexpected scheduling and communication problems with our Independent Contractors (IC’s) have delayed some of the analysis work. A recent phone conference has resolved the issues and work is progressing.

The grant period is scheduled to end on Dec. 31, 2007, which would now be too soon to complete the work. Our original grant proposal called for a 12-month timeline. Since we could not start until we received the contract to sign, which arrived on April 2, we lost those first 3 months. Hence we have requested and received an extension until March 31, 2008. Our IC’s feel this is ample time to complete the project.

Some Highlights: One important finding from the project comes from Mike Ward’s GIS Habitat Analysis done to compensate for the absence of random sampling in the siting of point count locations in the BCN database. “Bird Conservation Network point counts are distributed such that they have excellent coverage of upland forests, savanna/edge, grasslands, and shrublands. All of these habitats have well over 5% of the total habitat sampled. This means that the amount of habitat within in 100 m of a point count accounts for greater than 5% of the total amount of this habitat available in northeast Illinois. For comparison, most systematic bird censusing studies (e.g. BBS) sample well under 1% of the total amount of area.”

In the case of grasslands the portion surveyed was over 20% and for upland forest almost 15%. One habitat in which the samples could easily be increased is floodplain forest.

**8. Bird Conservation Alliance Conference:** Mary Lou Mellon.. BCN is a member of Bird Conservation Alliance and all BCN member organizations may take advantage of the many outstanding bird-conservation articles published by BCA in its *Bird Calls* publication. The conference featured speakers on subjects as widely varied as the ongoing trials of bringing the Condor back from the brink of extinction, introduced forest pests, preventing climate change by reducing tropical deforestation, the successes of ProAves, an organization dedicated to establishing bird reserves in Colombia to protect the winter habitat of migratory neotropical songbirds and NYC Audubon’s new Birdsafe Building Guidelines publication, available on their website.

**9. Nominating Committee for 2008 officers:** Judy will accept applications for 2008 BCN officers and will present the slate at the January 2008 meeting.

**10. Cook County Board Separation:** After discussion, the vote was taken by club. Six 6 clubs voted yes (to support separating the boards), 4 voted OK with reservations (or

willingness to go along with the majority), and 6 abstained. Without a clear mandate, BCN will not move forward to support the separation of the boards. Members want to know more about the details before they are willing to support this concept.

**11. Make BCN More Visible:** Donnie said that BCN needs to develop rapid responses to anti-conservation issues that come up in the news. We need to get letters out quickly in response to issues that are clear-cut. ExCom has the authority to do this. The workday at Lost Mound was hailed as a worthwhile project with “visibility” for BCN.

**12. Westchester Woods FPDCC petition to get a dog park:** Sigrid Schmidt, COS will attempt to get some details of this petition from Randi Doeker.

**13. Resolutions re Jim Landing and Jerry Kumery:** Donnie read a resolution re Jim Landing (Appendix 2). It was passed by acclamation and will be added to the BCN website as a tribute to this recently deceased birder. Bob Fisher said that his resolution re recently deceased Jerry Kumery will be ready for the January 2008 meeting.

**14. Deer Policy:** Bob Fisher has finished a draft of this paper. It will be emailed to all member clubs in the next week or two and will be discussed and voted upon at the January 2008 meeting.

**15. Next Meeting:** Dick announced that the next meeting will be January 19, 2008, at the Center for Green Technology, 445 Sacramento Blvd., Chicago 60612 from 1-4pm. There will be a guided tour of the center at 10:30am, that will take approximately 1 hour.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Lou Mellon  
Secretary

### **Appendix 1**

#### BCN Wooded Island Support Statement

The Bird Conservation Network is in support of the Chicago Park District/Friends of the Forest Preserve three-year plan to improve the habitat of the Paul Douglas Wooded Island. We feel this program will create a mixed array of plantings for maximum biodiversity which will support wildlife as well as meet the aesthetic needs of the public.

### **Appendix 2**

Dear Alderman\_ \_ \_ \_

The Cook County Board of Commissioners has approved a new policy to allow feral cat colonies that employ a system known as Trap, Neuter, Release (TNR). This means there will be feral cat communities within City.

Because of my concern for wildlife I have done extensive research and discovered that the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians has passed a resolution opposing these TNR programs because they also pose a significant human health risk.

**“Cat colonies, even managed ones, pose a serious human health risk. Diseases that can be transmitted to humans, such as ringworm, cat scratch fever, and toxoplasmosis, cannot be controlled in managed cat colonies. Rabies is a very real threat. Raccoons and skunks are common visitors to feeding stations, as well as foxes, opossums, and rats. Raccoons and skunks are the most common carriers of rabies in wildlife, and cats are the domestic animal most commonly reported rabid in the U.S. Feeding stations artificially put these animals in close contact with each other.”**

The theory of these cat colonies is that because the animals are neutered the colonies eventually diminish to next to nothing. Reports from all over the country indicate a different reality - that while the cat colonies may start out small, their numbers grow into the thousands as the TNR locations become dumping grounds for unwanted pets. Thus, what seemed like a well-meaning program to take care of a few feral cats turns into a serious hazard for both people and native wildlife.

I urge you to take action to prohibit feral cat colonies within the Chicago city limits. The organizations that promote these colonies have a long list of recommendations for individuals and public agencies for improving the lives of feral cats. Opening feeding stations on public land is not one of them. See the attached “MANAGED” CAT COLONIES; THE WRONG SOLUTION TO A TRAGIC PROBLEM, enclosed in this letter.

Sincerely

To find your alderman’s name, address and ward number, go to <http://www.chicityclerk.com/citycouncil/alderman/find.html>

### **Appendix 3**

#### **RESOLUTION**

Be it resolved, November 3, 2007

Whereas, long-time birder Jim Landing recently died, and

Whereas Jim made significant contributions to birding, being a willing mentor to generations of new birders of every age, and

Whereas Jim Landing was an especially vocal and instrumental supporter of conservation in Lake Calumet, and in raising consciousness about the importance of the Lake Calumet region, and

Whereas Jim Landing, among other accomplishments, conceived, organized and developed the very popular Gull Frolic, and

For these and other good reasons the Bird Conservation Network hereby resolves that Jim Landing should be honored with high esteem, and that this proclamation be permanently entered into the website of the Bird Conservation Network

BIRD CONSERVATION NETWORK, by

Dick Riner, President

Mary Lou Mellon, Secretary