



Bird Conservation Network

BCN Quarterly Meeting Minutes
Saturday, April 11, 2009
Gibson Woods, Hammond, Indiana

Attendees: Terry Schilling; Chris Van Wassenhove, CAS; Bobbi Asher, CAS; Annette Prince, CBCM; Mary Lou Mellon, CBCM; Teri Radke, CBCM; Sigrid Schmidt, COS; Jill Niland, COS; Glenn Gabanski, DBC; Bob Fisher, DBC; Eric Secker, DBC; Mary Anne Harrison, IAS; Joan Bruchman, IOS; Valerie Lewis, Lake-Cook Aud.; Diane Rosenberg, Lake County Aud; Kim Ramirez, Midewin; Jenny Vogt, NAS-CW; Judy Pollock, NAS-CW; Lee Ramsey, NAS-CW; Donna Gonzalez, Save the Dunes; Dick Riner, Thorn Creek Aud.; Donnie Dann, TNC; Carolyn Marsh, CAS, guest.

A quorum was established with 21 representatives from 13 member organizations and 1 individual member present.

Prior to the beginning of the meeting Jenny Vogt mentioned the Illinois Ornithological Society's grant program. IOS accepts grants from across the state for bird-related projects: research, education and outreach benefiting birds in Illinois. This year it has secured funding for six of the 11 grants for \$500 but some projects need more than that. She appealed to BCN reps as individuals and to their organizations to consider sponsoring part or all of a grant. Further information will be sent out to reps

The meeting was called to order by Vice President Joan Bruchman at 1:06pm.

Administrative:

1. Secretary--Mary Lou Mellon. The minutes of the January 17th Annual Meeting at Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum have been distributed via email and were approved as written. They are posted on the website. Speakers on the agenda were reminded to please provide the secretary with a brief rundown of the facts of their presentations for the minutes.
2. Treasurer's report—Glenn Gabanski. As of 4/11/09 the checkbook balance is \$2,045.59; the CD balance is \$3,000 (BCN purchased a short term CD maturing on 7/3/09 in hopes rates will be higher by then). The funds balance is \$4,761.52 (which includes known expenses not yet paid and estimated income not yet received—hence is a more realistic view of how much money BCN has). The estimated amount to spend by the end of the year to avoid income tax: \$785.28. Note:

If we get the grant (see below) we will need to spend \$500 in matching funds for the grant leaving only \$285.28 to spend elsewhere.

3. Memberships—Glenn and Donnie. Glenn: All organizations except Prairie Woods Audubon have paid their 2009 dues. Glenn will contact their rep to inquire as to the delay. We have 19 member organizations (assuming PWA pays) and 3 individual members. (We lost new individual member Ryan White from last year.)

Donnie: Peoria Audubon has applied for membership in BCN. The club feels that its goals are closely aligned with those of BCN and that we may be able to assist each other in bird conservation and advocacy. Peoria Audubon cannot be accepted under the current by-laws. Those present agreed that it is a good idea to accept them; the executive committee will bring a bylaws change to the next meeting and the matter will be brought up for a vote again.

Editorial Committee: Bob Fisher

The best-practice bridge maintenance paper has still not been written. Annette Prince, CBCM, advised that the bridge painting that was stopped during breeding season last year to save the nesting swallows efforts was finished in the fall. Since that time, the city has put up spikes to prevent the swallows from nesting under the bridge, though Annette thinks they will not be effective.

Projects Update:

1. Almond Marsh rookery—Diane Rosenberg. Lake County Audubon chapter, in collaboration with the Lake County Forest Preserve District and Integrated Lakes Management, erected an artificial nesting platform in the heron rookery at Almond Marsh, in Lake County. Over the past few years, the chapter has been concerned about the declining number of nesting sites due to the death of trees and wind damage at the formerly thriving rookery. Lake County Audubon explored artificial platforms used in Vermont, obtained an Audubon Collaborative Funding Grant to cover the \$400 cost, and worked with the Lake County Forest Preserve District to implement a pilot program. The platform was erected in February, and as of March a pair of Great Blue Herons was using the man-made nesting structure. On April 8, 2009, young hatched. www.lakecountyaudubon.org for the details of construction.

2. TogetherGreen fellowship—Kim Ramirez. Kim is one of 40 people selected from competitors nationwide for the TogetherGreen Conservation Leadership Program, part of a new conservation initiative of the National Audubon Society with support from Toyota. Ramirez will focus her efforts on the Bobolinking Project, which will engage young adults from local high schools and community-based organizations in stewardship and biological monitoring projects at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in Wilmington and Bartel Grassland in Matteson. The project will accomplish this through a series of workshops, field experiments and restoration workdays. The Bobolinking Project's website is www.kmramirez.com.

3. Chicago Bird Collision Monitors—Annette. CBCM rescued 2000 birds and salvaged 3000 during 2008. Working with CAS, the organization is pleased to report almost 100% voluntary participation in the Lights Out! Program for downtown high-rise buildings; however, it is hoping to get the city to make light-reduction measures a city ordinance rather than voluntary. CBCM is assisting other cities and locations to begin light reduction/bird collision prevention, including San Francisco, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston and a group at Northern Illinois campus. Annette received the Marlys Bulander Working Together for Wildlife Award from the National Wildlife

Rehabilitation Association, and the work of CBCM was recognized and congratulated by the wildlife rehabilitators, IDNR and US Fish and Wildlife representatives at the conference.

4. Cook County Forest Preserve Trails Task Force—Jenny. A meeting was held on April 6th, facilitated by Benjamin Cox of Friends of the Forest Preserves. About 20 individuals attended, representing various organizations and forest preserve users groups: outdoor enthusiasts, birders, restoration volunteers, horse back riders, and mountain bikers. A list of kudos and concerns regarding the FPDCC trails was compiled. This group will meet again in May to discuss the formation of Trail Advisory Councils for individual preserves or regions. These councils may make recommendations to the existing FPDCC trails committee. The pilot preserve may be Deer Grove.

5. Burnham Park—Judy Pollock. Audubon Chicago Region has been asked to begin a monitoring project at the “urban savannah” that is being created south of McCormick Place, as an extension of the McCormick Place Bird Sanctuary in Burnham Park. This is part of a study under the auspices of the Chicago Park District. Judy has found a number of willing volunteers. The focus of the study is to determine how installing prairie and savanna habitat affects birds.

6. Letter of Commendation—Sigrid Schmidt. Leslie Borns is writing a letter of commendation about Chicago police officer Rich Hager to Superintendent of Police Jody Weis. Hager has been extremely helpful in maintaining and protecting the Jarvis and Montrose area including the beach. Leslie would like BCN reps to sign on to her letter of commendation.

Advocacy

1. Olympics 2016—Judy. The carefully constructed statement “We support the commitment made by the 2016 Olympic Committee to protect and enhance bird habitat in the Chicago area during the preparations before and during the 2016 event,” was discussed as part of the cover letter for transmitting the BCN position paper on the Olympics. The position paper was also discussed at length. Donnie moved that the Position on the Proposal to Host the 2016 Summer Olympics in Chicago (Appendix A) be accepted. The movement was seconded by Bob Fisher. A vote was taken by organization; there was a strong consensus to accept the position, though the vote was not unanimous. Voting against the proposal were Terry Schilling, Dick Riner for Thorn Creek Audubon and Chris Van Wassenhove and Bobbi Asher for CAS.

2. Advocacy—Donnie, Judy, Carolyn Marsh (guest).

Donnie: The Senate bill, S. 690, reauthorizes the existing Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA), but at significantly higher levels, to meet the growing needs of our migrants, many of which are in rapid decline. The legislation was introduced following the release of [U.S. State of the Birds](#), the most comprehensive assessment to date on the status of bird populations. The report found that over 250 American bird species are in decline or facing severe threats. All members and reps are encouraged to call or write to their Senators in support of the legislation: <http://www.abcbirds.org/action>.

Reps and organizations are also encouraged to do everything possible to discourage the extension of Illinois Route 53, which threatens not only Almond Marsh but a great many wetlands in the area.

Donnie will present the Bird Conservation Trends at McHenry County Audubon on April 24th.

Judy: The wind turbines that are proposed for offshore Evanston seem to be moving forward, despite the fact that such things have never been built in fresh water. This is apparently an issue that must be dealt with. Judy, Libby Hill, Matt Cvetas and Eleanora di Liscia are Evanston residents who wrote a position paper. The Editorial Committee will review it and present it to the membership for adoption at the next meeting.

Carolyn Marsh: The Indiana Office of Energy and Defense Development has approved a federal wind energy grant for \$24,250 for two wind turbines at Forsythe Park and Wolf Lake in Hammond, Indiana. The port authority says the purpose for choosing the Wolf Lake location is to showcase their attention to alternative energy and good stewardship. It wants to go ahead with the project despite the lack of public input, lack of due diligence re the project, the doubling of the cost (from \$110,000 to \$231,216), the low wind rating of the area and the fact that the turbines will interfere with the \$9,000,000 Wolf Lake Ecosystem Restoration Project, which was to provide feeding and nesting habitat for migrating birds. Carolyn has sent a letter on behalf of Chicago Audubon Society to Travis Murphy, of the Office of Energy and Defense Development, proposing relocation of the turbines. She is also advocating the turning off of the turbines (if they are built) during migration, which amounts to 3 months in the spring and 3 months in the fall. [See Appendix B for BCN's letter opposing the siting of the turbines and for Carolyn's letter.]

Publicity

Eric Secker distributed copies of the stunning new four-color BCN brochure designed by him (Piazza Design) and written by Mary Lou. There are plenty of brochures for reps to take for use at meetings, events or International Migratory Bird Days. Eric and Mary Lou were congratulated on a job well done.

Fundraising

The newly formed Fundraising Committee has not yet met.

Monitoring and Research

1. Grant Proposal. Glenn has written and submitted a request for \$1,200 to Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund (with an additional commitment of matching funds of \$500 from BCN and \$200 from Audubon-Chicago Region, the total will be \$1,900). The money is to be used to support the BCN monitoring program and will go toward: purchasing GPS units; preparing Bird Song CDs; printing, copying, and mailing of maps and reporting forms; providing an hourly wage for someone to enter habitat data into database; and providing a stipend to maintain and improve database and send relevant data to land managers. The BCN has been successful in receiving IWPF grants in the past and it's hoped that the request this time will also be successful.

2. Changes to BCN Census—Lee. The name of the BCN Census needs to be changed to the BCN Survey, to more accurately reflect what it actually is. The name change was moved, seconded and voted in (over our webmaster's bemused objections).

Lee is also instigating a pilot project for some monitoring changes that will be included for all next year. Anyone willing to experiment a little with his or her monitoring this season can get details by emailing Lee at leeramsey@comcast.net.

3. Site-based monitoring—Judy. Raise your monitoring skills to the next level: Audubon is adopting adaptive monitoring, in which a target bird or habitat is selected; threats are spelled out; and conservation action is set in place. This is to be piloted at Bartel and possibly four other sites this year.

Meetings and Events

1. Breeding Season Blitzes—Lee. There are one day bird blitzes on June 6 (Paul Douglas: Duane Heaton 847-358-5856), June 13 (Pratt's Wayne: Jim Green, green9698@sbcglobal.net, & Jeff Smith, mrqmagoo@comcast.net), (Plum Creek: Al Thomas, wooduck_1999@yahoo.com), (Lakewood: Jim Dudas, jdudas14606@hotmail.com) and June 20 (Poplar Creek: Jenny Vogt, jmvogt2003@yahoo.com), (Rush Creek: Doug Crane, mdcrane1024@sbcglobal.net). Participants are being lined up now. [Note: there is a flier listing these and additional blitzes in Appendix C]

2. Give Back to the Birds Workday—Joan. Twenty-one participants enjoyed a nicely productive early season bird walk lead by Eric Secker and Bob Fisher from 7:30am to 9am before enjoying mid-morning treats and then getting to work planting and transplanting in the areas designated by Forest Preserve District of DuPage County staff Cindy Hedges and Scott Meister. Seeds of blue-fruited dogwood, scarlet hawthorn, dotted hawthorn, early wild rose, Illinois rose, elderberry, late horse gentian and culver's root were scratched in and tamped down. Transplanted were nanny berry and blackhaw. Some buckthorn was lopped and will be treated with an herbicide at a later date. Participants look forward to seeing how the area looks in a year or two. Thanks to all who came out for this fun morning!

The fall work day has yet to be decided. Suggestions are Spring Creek Valley, Bartel, Bemis Woods or Hoosier Prairie.

3. Wild Things Feedback. It was unanimous that this conference was the best ever and that the venue was the best location ever. The range of programs was lauded. Thanks, Judy and Bob.

Other Business

1. The BCN stationery needs some updating or redesigning. Chris Van Wassenhove suggested Skip Wolter at the CAS office. Judy will contact her.
2. The next quarterly meeting will be July 18th at James “Pate” Philip State Park, 2054 West Stearns Road, Bartlett. Joan has arranged for a free room for BCN from 12 to 4pm. There will be a walk before the meeting at a location to be advised.
3. It was noted that Jerry Garden, longtime CAS rep and land steward, is moving to Alaska.
3. Profuse thanks to our gracious hostess Donna Gonzalez for today’s meeting at a superb location. Not only did she have the room set up for us, but she lead the interpretive bird walk through the dune and swale topography of Gibson Woods prior to the meeting and provided coffee and homemade cookies for meeting attendees. The very attractive Awareness/Nature Center had excellent displays—including mastodon bones—that provided great interest during the break. This was a very fun and interesting location for a meeting!

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Lou Mellon
Secretary

Appendix A

Position on the Proposal to Host the 2016 Summer Olympics in Chicago

The Bird Conservation Network is a coalition of 19 birding and bird conservation organizations, located primarily in the Chicago metropolitan area. Our member groups aggregate in excess of 35,000 people. BCN’s mission is the conservation of birds and the preservation, restoration and enhancement of the habitats they need to survive.

The Bird Conservation Network believes that Chicago parks along the lakefront and inland provide a superior experience for the people of the Chicago metro area. But for the birds, these parks also function as oases in a sea of concrete. Millions of birds migrate through Chicago each spring and fall, including scores of endangered, threatened or declining species. They depend on this habitat for survival during migration, the most critical time of their life cycle.

Birds are the most accessible connection to nature for many urban residents and greatly enhance our quality of life. Their disappearance is our loss. It is from this perspective that the BCN approaches Chicago’s proposal to host the Summer Olympics in 2016.

The BCN understands that Chicago's bid to host the 2016 Olympics offers a unique opportunity to the city. As the planning process proceeds, BCN looks forward to working with the City and the Olympic Committee to ensure that both the long-term legacy and the short-term impacts on the parks are addressed.

It is BCN's belief that the Olympics should be a catalyst for a revitalized park system and should reinvigorate existing habitats. In order to ensure that this is the case, the planning process, from the outset, must include planning for the legacy that the Olympics will leave to Chicago nature.

In particular, the plans should incorporate the following principles:

Protect Lake Michigan and the shoreline parks

Lake Michigan and its shoreline are among Chicago's most valuable treasures. Tens of thousands of birds use the lakefront parks on any given day during migration. After the Olympics, the city should implement improvements that enhance the habitat value and the beauty of the lakefront. Special care must be taken during construction and during the Olympic games to protect the existing lakefront bird sanctuaries and other landscaping used by migrating birds.

Include the Public in the Planning Process

While the Olympics are a global event, the impacts before, during and after the event are local. The planning process must provide opportunities for the birders and others who regularly use and volunteer in the parks to provide input. Bird conservation concerns must be factored into the plans. Public participation is critical.

Fund Park Restoration after the Olympics

Plans must be developed early in the process to determine the desired condition of the sites once the Olympics are over. Funding must be allocated to remove temporary structures, restore disturbed habitats and landscapes, and ensure the long-term legacy. Moreover, the bird conservation community needs to be involved in planning for the restoration of the parks after the Olympics have ended.

The success of the Olympics will be measured not only by its economic impact and the ability to showcase the City of Chicago in the eyes of the world, but by the legacy it leaves to the people of Chicago, and to the migratory birds who depend so heavily on our great city's irreplaceable greenspace during their arduous twice a year journeys. The Bird Conservation Network welcomes the opportunity to work with the City of Chicago and the Chicago 2016 Committee. Together, we can ensure that the legacy of the Olympics - both for ourselves, and for our birds - is a source of pride to all Chicagoans.

Appendix B

Mayor Thomas McDermott, Jr.
Hammond City Hall
5925 Calumet Avenue
Hammond, Indiana 46320

Dear Mayor McDermott:

I'm writing on behalf of the 18 bird clubs, Audubon societies, ornithological groups and other conservation organizations and their more than 35,000 members in the Chicago metropolitan area (including northwest Indiana) that constitute our coalition, Bird Conservation Network (BCN), about the proposed Wind Turbines at Hammond's Wolf Lake Memorial Park and at Forsythe Park/Wolf Lake. BCN recognizes the benefit of wind energy to fight global warming under most circumstances, but these turbines cause significant bird and bat mortality if they are sited improperly. Areas where birds breed and through which they use established migration corridors are examples of places that wildlife authorities agree that wind turbines should not be placed.

The Hammond Parks where these turbines are planned are precisely the sites that should be off-limits to turbine construction. BCN has worked closely with scientists from Chicago's Field Museum and the City of Chicago's Department of the Environment (DOE) to demarcate areas suitable and those unsuitable for wind energy development. One area where the Field scientists and the DOE agree turbines should be excluded is the environs of Lake Calumet and Wolf Lake. In addition the National Audubon Society has designated the Hammond Lakefront Park and Bird Sanctuary, George Lake, and Forsythe Park-Wolf Lake as the "State Line Calumet IBA" (Important Bird Area), in recognition of their importance in protecting our declining songbird populations.

We strongly urge you to oppose these sites for the turbine construction.

Sincerely,

Bird Conservation Network,

Judy Pollock, President

March 24, 2009

Mr. Travis Murphy
Office of Energy and Defense Development
101 West Ohio Street, Suite 1250
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
Fax: 317-232-8995

Dear Mr. Murphy:

Re: Hammond wind turbine project Grant 9-APE-005 and EDS #A302-APE-005

The Indiana Office of Energy and Defense Development approved a federal wind energy grant for \$24,250 for two 10kW unit wind turbines at Forsythe Park and Wolf Lake Memorial Park at Wolf Lake in Hammond, Indiana. At issue is the placement of the turbines in a designated National Audubon Society, State Line Calumet, Important Bird Area and an ecologically restored lake.

There are at least ten controversial aspects about the Hammond Port Authority project:

1) **The process:** There was no public input before the Office of Energy and Defense Development approved the HPA grant application. After the grant was approved, a notice was sent to only residents living 300 feet of the Wolf Lake property on January 9, 2009.

2) **Due diligence:** The Board of Zoning Appeals failed to perform due diligence at its public hearing held January 28, 2009 when it approved of the port authority petition for height and special use variances in the parks. The board, when asked if they received a letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a letter from the Bird Conservation Network said no and declined to postpone their decision until they reviewed the letters.

Then the BZA sent the petition to the Hammond City Council for approval at their February 9 council meeting. However, the BZA still didn't have the letters in their packet sent to the City Council. The City Council's clerk, Debra L. Jimenez, admitted that she withheld the US Fish & Wildlife letter she received through the mail from the council at the February 9 meeting. She told me that she was waiting for Milan Kruszynski, Director Hammond Port Authority, to advise her but he didn't return her phone call. The council postponed the vote for more financial information and to obtain the letters for the next council meeting.

At the next council meeting held February 23, during the pre-council work session, the attorney for the port authority, Kevin C. Smith, pressured the council to approve the BZA actions when he said he contacted Senator Evan Bayh to complain about the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The complaint prompted Bayh's office to launch an investigation of the US Fish and Wildlife Service's actions. The council did vote later that evening at the council meeting to concur with the BZA decision.

3) **Low wind rating:** No actual measurement (MET) or computer modeling was performed to calculate how much energy the two wind turbines will generate. Instead, the port authority used available data from an industry bordering Wolf Lake that rated the wind current so low that turbines would not provide energy savings. The two turbines will power light bulbs for a pump station and seasonally used guardhouse and bathroom facilities. Regardless of the real facts, the HPA decided Wolf Lake had the ‘feel’ of a modest but acceptable wind energy site.

4) **Tower design:** Instead of the cylinder tower design, the tower is the outmoded lattice design, particularly harmful to birds.

5) **Noise:** No independent readings of ambient sound levels were taken in the city park. Placement of turbines can make a difference in noise levels.

6) **Education:** The education component is limited to an information kiosk on alternative energy and an “attempt” to make available a meter that will display current energy translated into dollars. Since educating children is a part of the project, then the project should educate the importance of existing wildlife in relationship to wind turbine sitings.

7) **Cost:** The \$231,216 cost of the two wind turbines has more than doubled from \$110,000 originally quoted to the Indiana Office of Energy and Defense Development.

8) **Restoration of wetlands at Wolf Lake:** Various government agencies have invested \$9 million on a Wolf Lake Ecosystem Restoration Project. One of the reasons for the project was to build new wetlands to provide feeding and nesting habitats for migrating birds. The wind towers interfere with that goal.

9) **Literature favors Audubon:** There is literature cited by the Hammond Port Authority that supposedly challenges Audubon’s position that turbines kill birds and bats. However, the literature actually agrees with Audubon that proper design and siting is imperative to minimize fatalities. For example, in the cited document *Designing a Future for Wind Power in Maine*, it states there is an inherent need to develop criteria to guide the siting process. That environmental concern must be considered to help steer projects to the most appropriate sites. The report even mentions a flawed process that was corrected to require developers to submit a pre-construction monitoring plan.

10) **Purpose:** The Hammond Port Authority states the purpose for choosing the Wolf Lake location is its high visibility to Toll Road and Calumet Avenue drive-bys and to “showcase” the alternative energy and good stewardship of the areas it manages. However, conveying the message to the public that Wolf Lake is a protected restored wetland nature area and a designated National Audubon Society Important Bird Area would greatly enhance Hammond’s reputation on the environment.

A recent article in *The Buffalo News* (March 13, 2009) informs the public about an Adirondack Park Agency proposal that would establish streamlined permits for turbines

up to 125 feet. It would require they blend into the surroundings and follow analysis of nearby bat and bird habitats, including endangered species.

Audubon does support properly sited wind turbines as an alternate energy source but the Hammond project just doesn't add up to save energy, money, or the environment. Chicago Audubon requests that the Hammond Port Authority convene a meeting to discuss relocating the wind turbines.

Sincerely,

Carolyn A. Marsh
Chicago Audubon Society
Whiting, Indiana
219-659-7904

Appendix C

Join Us For the 7th Annual Breeding Bird Blitz

This year we'll be doing something a little different - scouring important sites for birds of all habitats, so that we may learn which birds are present and which parts of the site they are using. The information we gather will address important conservation issues at each site. The goal is to count every bird in each of these large preserves. At most sites, we will be meeting at 7, splitting into groups which will each cover a section of the preserve. We will gather with other blitzers for lunch around 11 to share findings and stories.

Spend a Fun Morning Helping our Birds!

All are welcome! If you can identify most of the breeding birds in Chicago Wilderness, you can be a team leader; if not, you can join a team. Some of the blitzes will also be mapping invasive plant species, so if you can identify plants you

are welcome as well. Come and spend a morning counting birds with a team or on your own. Please contact the coordinator for your county:

Saturday June 6 Cook County North: **Paul Douglas** *Stan Stec 847 398-2097; Duane Heaton 847 358-5856*

Thursday June 11 Will County: **Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie** *Allison Hedden 815 423-2149.*

Saturday June 13 Will County: **Plum Creek Nature Center, Plum Creek Greenway and Goodenow Grove** *Al Thomas 708 957-9847; wooduck_1999@yahoo.com*

Saturday June 13 DuPage County: **Pratt's Wayne** *Jim Green green9698@sbcglobal.net; Jeff Smith mrqmagoo@comcast.net*

Saturday June 13 Lake County: **Lakewood** *Jim Dudas 847.540.0484; jdudas14606@hotmail.com*

Saturday June 20 Cook County North: **Poplar Creek** *Jenny Vogt 630 837-4649, jmvogt2003@yahoo.com*

Saturday June 20 McHenry County: **Rush Creek** *Doug Crane; 815-338-0046; mdcrane1024@sbcglobal.net*

Saturday June 27 Kane County: **Prairie Kame Ann Haverstock** (630) 232-9398

You're also invited to an identical event during migration season-
Orland Grassland Grand
Birding Event
Saturday, May 16
Contact Suzanne Koglin
708-349-4913