



## *Bird Conservation Network*

BCN Quarterly Meeting Minutes  
Saturday, October 31, 2009, 1-4pm  
Highland Park, IL

Attendees: Chris Van Wassenhove, CAS; Teri Radke, Mary Lou Mellon, CBCM; Christine Williamson, COS; Glenn Gabanski, Bob Fisher, Eric Secker, DBC; Libby Hill, Brian Herriott, ENSBC; Mary Ann Harrison, IAS; Joan Bruchman, IOS; Jean Sodemann, CiCi Bimberg, Lake-Cook; Diane Rosenberg, Lake County; Kim Ramirez, Midewin; Judy Pollock, Lee Ramsey, NAS-CW; Donnie Dann, TNC; Terry Schilling. Guests: Stephen Packard, Audubon Chicago Region; Benamin Cox, Friends of the Forest Preserve; Marianne Hahn, president, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Alliance.

The meeting was called to order by President Judy Pollock at 1:03pm. A quorum was established with 18 representatives from 12 member organizations and one individual member present. Judy extended a welcome to new representative from Evanston North Shore Bird Club Brian Herriott and substitute Cici Bimberg of Lake-Cook Audubon. Introductions were made.

Judy highlighted some of Audubon's core values for all bird conservationists to consider. Among them were action based on thoughtful and thorough planning for the sustainability of our planet, collaboration to achieve goals, optimism to advance answers rather than questions and respect through effective dialog and transparency.

### **Administrative:**

1. The minutes of the Saturday, July 18, 2009, quarterly meeting were accepted as written. They are posted on the website at [www.BCNbirds.org](http://www.BCNbirds.org).
2. Treasurer's report: Glenn Gabanski. Current checkbook balance is \$1,784.89. After adding the \$3,000 CD and expected interest of \$3.76 and subtracting known expenses not yet paid of \$120, BCN has a funds balance of \$4,668.65.

In the spreadsheet, the line items "Grants" and "Grant Expenses" are not included in INCOME and EXPENSES and are not involved in determining taxable income. Currently there is an estimated net taxable income of \$912.60. According to BCN policy this would need to be spent by Dec. 31 to avoid paying 15% corporate income tax. The

large balance this year is due to unexpected donations as we received \$580 more income than budgeted.

Membership remains at 19 Organization Memberships and 3 Individual Memberships.

## **Projects/Initiatives**

**1. Habitat Categories**—Stephen Packard, Lee Ramsey. The Habitat Categories (Appendix A) were developed in conjunction with the Poplar Creek Birding Blitz of last summer by Lee, Karen Glennemeier and Stephen. The goal is for monitors to divide their sites into habitat units with a system designed to work for birders. Stephen pointed out that even a high quality savanna that is unburned for a few years will fill with invasive brush and begin to look like a woodland. It becomes important to determine what the area is being managed for, to determine what restoration efforts are needed. An example given was Somme Prairie, which looks like a prairie but has shrubland birds. Burning is key. Size is important to the classification, especially in the case of grasslands.

**2. Cook County Forest Preserve Issues**—Benjamin Cox, executive director of Friends of the Forest Preserve. Benjamin began by apologizing for taking the birding community's support for granted. Said he appreciates all of our efforts.

*A. Separation of the board of commissioners for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County from the Cook County board.* With the Cook County board attempting to serve both entities, the forest preserves are being short-changed and mistreated. Senate Bill 176 to separate the boards is presently poised to pass in the Illinois Senate. This initiative needs working grassroots support. Reps are encouraged to go back to their organizations and ask their members to talk to their state senator in support of separation of the two boards.

Chris Williamson said that birders need to lobby in Springfield. BCN could piggyback with the environmental lobby of the Sierra Club. She then proposed the following resolution: The Bird Conservation Network supports the separation of the Cook County board from the board of commissioners of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. The resolution passed unanimously.

*B. Wheeling Land Swap.* What looked like a land grab for Westin North Shore Hotel parking has turned into a swap in which the parcel remains forest preserve and the forest preserve complex receives improvements and amenities such as prairie restoration, signage and a new path. FOTFP feels this is compatible with appropriate forest preserve use and the hotel is earning green credits for the improvements to the forest preserve.

*C. Hinsdale Land Grab.* A proposed lease of 30 acres of Cook County Forest Preserve District property, which are cut off from the main part of Bemis Woods, to west suburban Hinsdale for ball fields would set a poor precedent by violating an ordinance that preserves and conserves land with limited recreational use. This is much different from the occasional use of the land for ball games, as is presently allowed on the

property. FOTFP remains opposed to this proposal because it would give control of the property to an entity other than the Forest Preserve District. Talks are ongoing.

**3. Monitoring Update**—Judy, Joan. Judy reported that there are 3 new data volunteers who are preparing reports for monitors and stewards. The plan is to release the information on the findings of recent years' efforts to monitors this winter. The GPS units funded by the IDNR grant that BCN received have been purchased for use in the habitat classification project. Judy and Lee hope will meet with Will and McHenry Counties this winter to extend monitoring there.

Joan reported that the monitors' recognition event will be either Saturday, February 6 or 13, 2010. It will begin with a bird walk at Northerly Island, followed by a tour of the bird galleries at the Field Museum and the ornithology laboratory. Box lunches will be from the Corner Bakery. The announcement of this event will go out soon. Honorees are this summer's Birding Blitz directors and all monitors will be invited.

#### **4. Conservation Project Updates**

*A. Almond Marsh*—Diane Rosenberg. Five great blue herons successfully fledged from the artificial tripod platform erected last February by Lake County Audubon! The trial platform was funded from an Audubon Collaborative Grant and the work of construction and erecting the platform was done by members of the Lake County Audubon chapter, the Lake County Forest Preserve and Integrated Lake Management. The nest on the artificial platform attracted many visitors to the marsh and generated a number of articles in local papers. As a result of the positive outcome, the Lake County Forest Preserve granted permission for one more platform at the marsh. [The total number of platforms that will be permitted has now been raised to ten though it is uncertain where the platforms might be placed.] In addition to helping with the installation of platforms, Lake County Audubon is exploring the possibility of adding educational signage, benches, and aquatic plants to upgrade the water quality of the marsh.

*B. Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie*—Marianne Hahn. The 9500 acres of the former Joliet Arsenal are now the largest prairie restoration in the world. All soil contaminated with TNT or other contaminant has undergone bioremediation and the land has been turned over to Midewin, except for 3 parcels, which will be transferred after they have been cleaned. Nearly 3000 acres have been restored to wet prairie, sand prairie, floodplains and wetlands. Restoration of 764 acres in the Grant Creek watershed should start in 2010. Removal of invasive plants is ongoing and burns are conducted where appropriate. The army is responsible for removal of contamination of the land and water in perpetuity. The monitoring and evaluation report on Midewin can be found at [http://www.fs.fed.us/mntp/nepa/FY2007\\_M&E\\_Report.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/mntp/nepa/FY2007_M&E_Report.pdf)

It was suggested that Midewin database latitude/longitude coordinates be added to the BCN Survey.

*C. Great Lakes Common Tern colony*—Donnie Dann. The Common Tern colony fledged 3 young this summer from the small raft built by Brad Semel. The Nature Conservancy located a barge for the use of the colony for nesting purposes and even arranged for it to be delivered to Great Lakes Harbor by next summer. Then it was discovered that the harbor is to be dredged next summer, so the terns would likely not be able to nest there. Stalemate for now, but Donnie and Brad are still hopeful a nesting site can be found for next summer.

*D. Foley's Pond*---Donnie. This 4½ acre park with a 2½ acre pond that is part of the Park District of Highland Park is known to be good habitat for migratory birds. Grants from Chicago Wilderness have allowed restoration work to go forward and a recent report indicates that replacing buckthorn with native shrubs has enhanced the number of migratory birds that use Foley's Pond. See Final Report Foley's Pond, Appendix B.

*E. Trends Analysis.* Donnie inquired about when BCN will do an update of the Trends Analysis, how it will be done, how it will be funded. Could a professional be found to do this pro bono? Eric Secker, Lee, Judy and Glenn will look into ways to design a program to draw information from the database on an annual basis; Terry Schilling and Chris Williamson will be consulted. Mike Ward of CTAP is including the BCN Survey in grants and something may come through there.

*F. Calumet Area*—Chris Van Wassenhove. The Army Corps of Engineers and Tetra Tech revised plans for restoration of Indian Ridge Marsh in the Calumet area near 122nd and Torrence. The Chicago Department of the Environment held a public comment meeting on 8/18/09 in the Hegewisch Library. Walter Marcisz and Carolyn Marsh studied the revised plans and prepared a letter of concern for CAS to send to the Army Corps of Engineers prior to the meeting. BCN and COS also sent letters in support of the concerns listed in the CAS letter.

Per Walter, the meeting went very well. It was attended by about 15 people from the community, mostly representing local organizations. The meeting started with a comment on the CAS letter that they would be very happy to work with CAS on the project. The CAS comments focused on how the plan would affect the nesting colony for the black-crowned night-herons, a state endangered bird. Comments from the Army Corps/Chicago DOE/Tetra Tech during the meeting:

- This is a restoration project, NOT a recreation project
- They would consider closing some of the planned trails during the nesting season
- They would never allow any activity in the BCNH protection zone
- The city continues to try to acquire land parcels abutting the area. To date, those unacquired parcels are due to owners being non-responsive
- There is some slight soil contamination. It is safe enough to cover those areas with more soil. No further remediation needed.
- There will be a new water control weir and culvert to better control water levels to protect the nesting BCNH colony.

- Agreed that they will control beavers so that water level is not affected.
- There is a three-year time frame for the project, but it will be ongoing after that
- They are not eager to add parking lots as they attract napping truckers. This may make access for birders more difficult, but it may be better for the area in general.

**5. Fundraising**—Judy. BCN is grateful to receive donations, but donations are not tax deductible. This information is to be added to the website and to the BCN brochure before it is reprinted. Worthy local bird-related projects will be considered for future BCN donations. The executive committee will make a decision about donating unexpended funds before the end of the year; monitors will be asked to suggest projects.

**6. Advocacy.** Donnie will attend the upcoming Bird Conservation Alliance conference in Washington, D.C., the theme of which is reversing the decline of neotropical migratory bird species and protecting their habitats.

Chris Williamson attended the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Conservation Congress in Springfield, IL, October 24-25, 2009. She reported that there was very little birder representation. Chris's summary of the meeting is full of valuable information; her report on the Conservation Congress is Appendix C.

Joan: The Chicago Park District will present design ideas for the future of Northerly Island at a meeting at Spertus Institute at 610 S. Michigan Avenue, 9th Floor, Tuesday, Nov. 10, 6-9pm. The public is invited to this series of workshops and to meet the design teams and react to the ideas. A good number of BCN reps are planning to attend and all reps are encouraged to recommend this opportunity to members of their organizations. We want good representation from the birding community at this meeting.

Joan also advised that the Raceway Woods issue, in which a maintenance road was approved for transporting antique vehicles through the forest preserve to an antique auto show, was a one-time exception allowing private use of forest preserve, because of the historic significance of the area, which had once been a racetrack.

**7. BCN rules and procedures**—Judy. Each club is entitled to exactly 3 representatives. Substitutes for representatives who cannot attend a given meeting are welcome. Per the BCN Bylaws, substitutes may vote on issues if they have been made known to the president prior to the meeting.

All BCN reps and members of our member organizations are encouraged to sign up for BCN-net, our bird conservation listserv, for information and discussion of bird conservation issues that are important to the greater Chicago area.

**8. Give Back to the Birds Days**—Joan. The Baker's Lake/Ron Beese Park Give Back to the Birds Day was successful with 22 participants. After an early bird walk, land manager Tom Vanderpoel of Citizens for Conservation presented the history of this rare remnant oak savanna ecosystem and a quick education on the many wild flowers present. The understory of the oak savanna with no buckthorn and myriad wildflowers was

breathhtakingly beautiful. Seeds from Joe-Pye weed, penstemon, and woodland sunflower were harvested by the group. These extremely valuable seeds will be processed by Citizens for Conservation and used at this site and four other locations. The group picnicked on the grass after harvesting.

The spring GBBD will be at Bartel Grassland, where we will plant wetland plugs on April 24, 2010. Hopefully there will be many shorebirds present to enhance the experience for all.

For the fall 2010 outing, Hennepin-Hopper, a beach sweep at Montrose, Lost Mound and Midewin are all under consideration. Judy mentioned that we are open to suggestions for future Give Back to the Birds Day locations.

**9. International Migratory Bird Day 2010**—Judy. The theme is The Power of Partnerships in Bird Conservation. IMBD is usually the second Saturday in May, but this year that date is May 8, which is spring bird count day in Chicagoland. IMBD is usually recognized around here during the months of April and May without a specific date, and the IMBD program is not rigid about the date. Joan runs a very successful IMBD at Lake Arlington.

**10. BCN 2010 Officer Nominations**—Bob Fisher. The nominating committee is formed: Lee, Bobbi Asher and Bob. It will present a slate by email in November or December.

The meeting was adjourned at 4pm.

Many thanks to Donnie and Jackie Dann for once again graciously hosting the meeting at their home. A wonderful time was had by all and the Halloween goodies were a treat!

The next meeting will be Saturday, January 9, 2010, at the Center for Green Technology or other location to be advised.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Lou Mellon,

Secretary

## **Appendix A**

### **BCN HABITAT CATEGORIES**

**Adapted from Chicago Wilderness Terrestrial Community Classification System**

#### **A. forest**

##### **A1. oak woodland**

- A1a. oak woodland with shrubs
- A1b. oak woodland without shrubs
- A2. upland forest
- A3. floodplain forest
  - A3a. mesic floodplain forest
  - A3b. wet floodplain forest
- A4. conifers
- A5. unassociated woody growth
- B. shrubland
  - B1. shrubland with grass/sedge ground cover
    - B1a. dry shrubland
    - B1b. moist shrubland
  - B2. shrub areas without grassy openings
  - B3. streamside thicket
- C. grassland
  - C1. savanna
    - C1a. savanna with shrubs
    - C1b. savanna without shrubs
  - C2. prairie
    - C2a. dry prairie
    - C2b. moist prairie
  - C3. meadow
    - C3a. dry meadow
    - C3b. moist meadow
- D. aquatic
  - D1. lake or pond
  - D2. marsh
    - D2a. marsh with shrubs
    - D2b. marsh without shrubs
  - D3. bog
- E. shoreline

## A. FOREST

### A1. oak woodland

Multi-layered with canopy dominated by oaks of 10-inch or greater DBH. Oak woodlands developed under 50-80% canopy cover but may currently have more. White oak dominated woodlands developed on well-drained soil, red oak woodlands in mesic environments, and swamp white oak woodlands in wetter conditions. Flatwoods, on level ground with a shallow water table, were also dominated by swamp white oak, except for sand flatwoods, where pin oaks were dominant.

#### A1a. oak woodland with shrubs

*Indicator species:* blue-winged warbler, eastern towhee, black-billed cuckoo, Cooper's hawk, yellow-billed cuckoo, eastern wood pewee, cedar waxwing, yellow-throated vireo, blue-gray gnatcatcher, rose-breasted grosbeak, Baltimore oriole

#### A1b. oak woodland without shrubs

*Indicator species:* Cooper's hawk, yellow-billed cuckoo, red-headed woodpecker, great crested flycatcher, eastern wood pewee, cedar waxwing, indigo bunting, yellow-throated vireo, blue-gray gnatcatcher, rose-breasted grosbeak, Baltimore oriole

### A2. upland forest

Multi-layered with no oaks but with other trees of 10-inch or greater DBH, often dominated by sugar maples. Mesic forests developed under 80-100% canopy cover.

*Indicator species:* broad-winged hawk, hairy woodpecker, veery, wood thrush, rose-breasted grosbeak, scarlet tanager, ovenbird, red-eyed vireo

### A3. floodplain forest

Along rivers and streams. Developed under 80-100% canopy cover.

*Indicator species:* barred owl, red-shouldered hawk, Acadian flycatcher, yellow-throated vireo, prothonotary warbler

**A3a. mesic floodplain forest**

Has less frequent flooding than wet floodplain forest, more well-developed understory. No clear dominant trees.

**A3b. wet floodplain forest**

Frequently flooded, more open understory. Dominant trees are silver maple, eastern cottonwood, black willow.

**A4. conifers**

With the exception of a few pinewoods, conifer stands are imported to our area.

*Indicator species:* Cooper's hawk, chipping sparrow, black-throated green warbler

**A5. UWG: unassociated woody growth**

Covered with trees but with no oaks, no trees of 20-inch DBH or greater, and no distinctive herbaceous species.

**B. SHRUBLAND**

**B1. shrubland with grass/sedge ground cover**

**B1a. dry shrubland with grass (or dry grassland with shrubs)**

Dominant plants: little bluestem, American hazelnut, poverty oat grass, wild plum, Iowa crab, scarlet oak, bur oak, prairie willow

*Indicator species:* loggerhead shrike, vesper sparrow, lark sparrow

**B1b. moist shrubland with grass (or moist grassland with shrubs)**

Dominant plants: blue joint grass, red-osier dogwood, Virginia wild rye, bur oak, blue-leaved and meadow willow, meadowsweet

*Indicator species:* American woodcock, willow flycatcher, brown thrasher, field sparrow, yellow warbler, common yellowthroat, yellow-breasted chat, Bell's vireo

**B2. shrub areas without grassy openings**

Shrubs with little grass and few trees.

*Indicator species:* black-billed cuckoo, eastern towhee, blue-winged warbler, yellow-breasted chat, American goldfinch, red-tailed hawk, barn owl, red-headed woodpecker, northern flicker, eastern kingbird, eastern bluebird, Baltimore oriole

**C. GRASSLAND**

**C1. savanna**

Multi-layered, dominated by oaks of 20-inch or greater DBH with grass/sedge ground cover. Oak savannas developed under 10-50% canopy but may currently have more. Dominant trees were bur oak, black oak, swamp white oak.

**C1a. savanna with shrubs**

*Indicator species:* black-billed cuckoo, eastern towhee, blue-winged warbler, yellow-breasted chat, American goldfinch, red-tailed hawk, barn owl, red-headed woodpecker, northern flicker, eastern kingbird, eastern bluebird, Baltimore oriole, orchard oriole

**C1b. savanna without shrubs**

*Indicator species:* red-tailed hawk, barn owl, red-headed woodpecker, northern flicker, eastern kingbird, Baltimore oriole

**C2. prairie**

Abundant native, non-aggressive grasses and wildflowers with no trees or shrubs.

**C2a. dry prairie**

Dominant plants: little bluestem, big bluestem, Indian grass, prairie dropseed, Bicknell's sedge, porcupine grass

*Indicator species:* upland sandpiper, horned lark, grasshopper sparrow, western meadowlark

**C2b. moist prairie**

Includes sedge meadows and fens.

Dominant plants: blue joint grass, sedges, prairie cordgrass



*Indicator species:* American bittern, northern harrier, king rail, short-eared owl, sedge wren, savannah sparrow, Henslow's sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, dickcissel, eastern meadowlark, bobolink

**C3. meadow**

Eurasian grasses without trees or shrubs, including hay meadows and old fields (abandoned cropland).

**C3a. dry meadow**

*Indicator species:* upland sandpiper, horned lark, grasshopper sparrow, western meadowlark

**C3b. moist meadow**

*Indicator species:* American bittern, northern harrier, king rail, short-eared owl, sedge wren, savannah sparrow, Henslow's sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, dickcissel, eastern meadowlark, bobolink

**D. AQUATIC**

**D1. lake or pond**

Permanent standing water with little or no emergent vegetation.

**D2. marsh**

Permanent or long-standing water with vegetation such as reeds, cattails, buttonbush and arrowhead.

**D2a. marsh with shrubs**

*Indicator species:* green heron, black-crowned night-heron, willow flycatcher

**D2b. marsh without shrubs**

*Indicator species:* pied-billed grebe, American bittern, least bittern, blue-winged teal, ruddy duck, Virginia rail, sora, common moorhen, American coot, black tern, Forster's tern, marsh wren, yellow-headed blackbird

**D3. bog**

Glacial relict wetlands in kettles.

Dominant plants: sedges, leatherleaf, marsh shield fern, sphagnum moss

*Indicator species:* willow flycatcher, yellow warbler

**E. SHORELINE**

Shores of Lake Michigan.

Dominant plants: marram grass, sand reed, Canada wild rye

*Indicator species:* piping plover, spotted sandpiper, common tern

## Appendix B Final Report on Foley's Pond

# Shrub Border for Migratory Birds: Foley's Pond

### Chicago Wilderness Small Grant Final Report

Park District of Highland Park

October 2009

Restoration Begins February 2005 Planting is Complete Summer 2009

#### Overview

This project aimed to increase benefit of Foley's Pond for migratory birds on the Lake Michigan Flyway. *Chicago Wilderness* Small Grant funds allowed us to install a dense 300-foot border of native shrubs and small trees designated useful for forage and shelter. The border was planted by natural areas volunteers, neighbors and Parks crew in an area formerly dominated by invasive buckthorn. Bird counts conducted in 2008 and

2009 were aimed at measuring use of newly restored areas by spring migratory birds and were recorded on the Bird Conservation Network's ebird online database.

### **Outcomes**

Approximately 1/3 acre of conservation area was restored based on the needs of migrant birds. Nearly 170 native shrubs and trees with potential for providing food (fruit and insects) and shelter were planted.

The work was done largely by volunteers who also learned about the role of the park in supporting migratory success. We estimate that we made 2,500 contacts with area residents, which resulted in about 120 volunteers over five separate occasions. We also reached 60 people who turned out either for neighborhood meetings or to a meeting of the Gardeners of the North Shore which featured our project.

An additional 20 people attended bird walks held in Foley's Pond in May 2008 and 2009. Also, natural areas volunteers attended bird survey training sponsored by the BCN as a result of our partnership on this project.

Finally, we made available five years of species data collected by Donald Dann of the Bird Conservation Network on the BCN ebird data base. We also conducted baseline and first year surveys to see how birds might be using newly restored areas. The following report discusses our findings with suggestions about how land managers might want to go about restoring critical bird habitat, vis a vis removal of invasive shrubs in the understory layer. We will continue to monitor results to determine if birds are increasingly using restored areas, as preliminary results show.

### **Conservation Significance**

Foley's Pond, a one-acre water body in Highland Park, IL is a hot spot for migratory birds traveling along the Lake Michigan Flyway. Since 2004, Donald Dann of the Bird Conservation Network has conducted spring bird walks in the park. In 2007, we documented 34 species, including 15 warbler species. Most summers, green heron and kingfisher pairs are resident. Since 1993, the District has worked to balance the removal of woody invasives with replacement by shrub and tree species known to be of benefit (food and shelter) to these bird species. Recent research suggests the critical importance of edge-dominated mature forests, including suburban parcels such as Foley's Pond, as food resource for spring migratory birds (*"Stopover Habitat Use by Spring Migrant Landbirds: The Roles of Habitat Structure, Leaf Development, and Food Availability,"* Rodewald and Brittingham, Pennsylvania State University, 2007).

### **Threats**

As predicted by the *"Migrant Bird Habitat Study,"* September 2004, migrant birds have been observed foraging for insects in the mature oak- and ash-dominated canopy of the park. Unfortunately, these trees are threatened by the presence of the Emerald Ash Borer in Lake County and also (affecting oak reproduction) shading from invasive shrubs.

A second consideration for migratory birds is a diverse vertical construction, with a shrub layer, small tree layer and canopy layer present. In two areas of the park, the District has been forced to remove the shrub layer because it consisted of buckthorn. In turn, we have planted shrub species as recommended by Judy Pollock, Chicago Audubon Region, *"Planting Suggestions for Shrubby Border at McCormick Place,"* February 2002. However, even with donations from community residents, budget constraints have left us without means to plant the larger-sized shrubs that will mean rapid replacement of the shrub layer.

### **History**

The Park District of Highland Park acquired the property known as Foley's Pond in 1925. Historically, Foley's would have been part of the mesic savanna habitat that stretched

from Green Bay Road west to the Skokie River Floodplain, as defined in the Chicago Wilderness community classification.

Land records show that the 4.63 acre site (consisting of three lots in McDaniel's Subdivision) was the location of a brickyard opened in 1877 by Robert Evans. The brickyard ceased operation in 1896, and the resulting pond, with a maximum depth of approximately 16-feet<sup>1</sup> has since been used by Highland Park residents for recreation including fishing, as it is today operated by the Park District.

<sup>1</sup> "Foley's Pond Restoration Project Development/Profile Plans," October 1985, Park District of Highland Park

<sup>2</sup> Personal interviews with Highland Park residents

Long time residents report that following this commercial use, the property evolved into an open area consisting of grasses and prairie forbs with scattered trees.<sup>2</sup> The 1939 aerials support this. As trees and shrubs became established in the absence of fire or forestry management, the canopy gradually closed in around the pond area.

As a sheltered watering hole along the Lake Michigan flyway, Foley's Pond became a stop over for migratory birds and an assortment of resident birds such as the Green Heron and Kingfisher.

A 1985 proposal for OSLAD funding <sup>3</sup> at Foley's Pond recorded flora consisting of "approximately one-third turf grass with several woody clumps of mature hardwood, surrounded by small understory of woody plants." Trees included mature *Fraxinus americana* (white ash), *Acer saccharum* (silver maple), *Carya ovata* (shagbark hickory), *Populus deltoides* (common cottonwood), *Quercus rubra* (red oak), *Quercus alba* (white oak) and *Tilia americana* (American basswood). The same report cites many forms of woodland wildflowers and shrubs, and also "small clumps of *Rhamnus cathartica* (common buckthorn) of little significant concern."

<sup>3</sup> "Foley's Pond Restoration Development Grant Application for Open Space Land Acquisition & Development Funds," September 26, 1985, Park District of Highland Park

<sup>4</sup> "Effects of Exotic *Lonicera* and *Rhamnus* on Songbird Nest Predation," Kenneth A Schmidt and Christopher Whelan, Conservation Biology pages 1502-1506.

<sup>5</sup> Stopover Habitat Use by Spring Migrant Landbirds; the Roles of Habitat Structure, Leaf Development, and Food Availability," Paul G Rodewald and Margaret Brittingham, The Auk, the American Ornithologists' Union, 2007.

An aggressive invader of woodland areas, *Rhamnus* species quickly grew in dominance at Foley's Pond and elsewhere. In fact, throughout the Chicago Wilderness region, land managers became aware of buckthorn's role in the declining health of our woodlands. In 1999, researchers Kenneth A. Schmidt and Christopher Whelan published "*Effects of Exotic *Lonicera* and *Rhamnus* on Songbird Nest Predation*,"<sup>4</sup> which pointed to a detrimental effect on nesting as predators more easily gained access to nests located in invasive shrub species.

While buckthorn was acknowledged as a threat to biodiversity, it did appear, from a bird's eye view, to complete the picture -- as other research<sup>5</sup> demonstrated the importance of woodland structure: canopy, shrubby understory and ground cover for a successful migrant rest stop. As buckthorn tends to muscle out its competitors—including native shrubs and trees—removing it usually leaves a barren landscape, devoid of most any other shrub or groundcover. Therefore, once clearing is complete, land managers must put something back in its place.

In 2001, the Park District, in consultation with Donald Dann of the Bird Conservation Network, started a restoration program at Foley's Pond aimed at conservation of the bird habitat. We recognized that the dense buckthorn edge, while neither legitimate historically nor desirable environmentally, did appear to provide shelter to many of the migrant birds we hoped to support (if only because other species had been shouldered

out). Also apparent was the declining health of mature trees such as ash in the canopy, and the lack of oak regeneration—both typical of Highland Park’s urban forest. Staff and volunteers began selectively clearing buckthorn shrubs and planting native trees and wildflowers in the northeast corner of the pond. This area was dedicated as “Volunteer Grove” in 2002. It is the most mature of the restoration areas in the park, and is Point 4 in our survey.

In 2005, clearing of buckthorn in Foley’s Pond was expanded to a one-third acre woodland area on the eastern edge of the property, across from Volunteer Grove, designated Point 2. With donations from neighbors and Park District funds, native shrubs such as hazelnut, witch hazel, plum (the latter two remnant species found on the property), choke cherry and viburnum sp. were installed in spring 2005, 2006 and 2007. With smaller shrubs being most affordable, progress in restoring the understory was slow. Deer browse also proved a problem as many shrubs needed to be replaced each spring.

In 2008, we applied for and received \$5,000 from the Chicago Wilderness Small Grant Fund toward creation of a shrub border for migratory bird habitat.

### Foley’s Pond Bird Count Results 2004 to 2009

Annual bird walks starting in May 2004 (rained out in 2005) showed an upward trend in number of species using the park, however we view this with caution as we may simply have been doing a better job of recording all species (eg, American Robin). Thus, we introduce the Warbler Ratio (WR), the number of warblers taken as a percentage of the total species which reveals a more constant level of these conservative species, though with a WR of .514 out of 37 species, 2007 remains a record year.

May 2004	May 2006	May 2007	May 2008	May 2009
Green Heron	Wood Duck	Green Heron	Canada Goose	Canada Goose
Red-eyed Vireo	Green Heron	Belted Kingfisher	Wood Duck	Green Heron
Gray-cheeked Thrush	Belted Kingfisher	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Double-crested Cormorant	Spotted Sandpiper
Tennessee Warbler	Downy Woodpecker	Downy Woodpecker	Green Heron	Chimney Swift
Chestnut-sided Warbler	Northern Flicker	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Belted Kingfisher	Belted Kingfisher
Magnolia Warbler	Least Flycatcher	Least Flycatcher	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-rumped Warbler	Veery	Red-eyed vireo	Downy Woodpecker	Downy Woodpecker
Palm Warbler	Gray-cheeked Thrush	Swainson’s Thrush	Hairy Woodpecker	Least Flycatcher
Bay-breasted Warbler	Swainson’s Thrush	American Robin	Least Flycatcher	Blue-headed Vireo
Black-and-white Warbler	Wood Thrush	Gray Catbird	Blue Jay	Blue Jay
American Redstart	American Robin	Brown Thrasher	Barn Swallow	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Wilson’s Warbler	Gray Catbird	Tennessee Warbler	Black-capped Chickadee	Black-capped Chickadee
Canada Warbler	Magnolia Warbler	Nashville Warbler	White-breasted Nuthatch	Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Scarlet Tanager	Black-and-white Warbler	Yellow Warbler	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Swainson's Thrush
White-crowned Sparrow	American Redstart	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Wood Thrush	American Robin
Northern Cardinal	Magnolia Warbler	American Robin	Gray Catbird	
Cape May Warbler	Cedar Waxwing		Yellow Warbler	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	Yellow Warbler		Chestnut-sided Warbler	
Black-throated Green Warbler	Chestnut-sided Warbler		Magnolia Warbler	
Blackburnian Warbler	Magnolia Warbler		Yellow-rumped Warbler	
Yellow-throated Warbler	Palm Warbler		Black-throated Green Warbler	
Palm Warbler	Black-and-white warbler		Palm Warbler	
Bay-breasted Warbler	American Redstart		Bay-breasted Warbler	
Black-and-white Warbler	Ovenbird		Black-and-white Warbler	
American Redstart	Northern Waterthrush		American Redstart	
Ovenbird	Common Yellowthroat		Northern Waterthrush	
Common Yellowthroat	Wilson's Warbler		Common Yellowthroat	
Wilson's Warbler	Canada Warbler		Wilson's Warbler	
Canada Warbler	White-throated Sparrow		Lincoln's Sparrow	
Scarlet Tanager	Northern Cardinal		Swamp Sparrow	
White-throated Sparrow	Red-winged Blackbird		Northern Cardinal	
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	Baltimore Oriole		Red-winged Blackbird	
Indigo Bunting	American Goldfinch		Common Grackle	
Brown-headed Cowbird		Brown-headed Cowbird		
Baltimore Oriole		Baltimore Oriole		
House Sparrow		American Goldfinch		
Total Species: 16	Total Species: 15	Total Species: 37	Total Species: 33	Total Species: 36
Total Warbler: 10	Total Warbler: 3	Total Warbler: 19	Total Warbler: 11	Total Warbler: 12
WR: .625	WR: .200	WR: .514	WR: .333	WR: .333

## Methodology

In our annual bird walks, from 2004 to 2007, our general observations were that the most birds were found 1) closest to the water 2) foraging in ash and oak trees in the canopy and 3) seeking shelter in the dense shrubs on the edges of the pond. The least conservative birds (robins, cowbirds, cardinals) were typically found at the entrance to the park (a long narrow pathway lined by residences) and some of the most conservative species were found in the buckthorn shrubs along the south and west sides of the pond (which border a remnant oak/hickory woodland and Sunset Valley Golf Course, respectively). We typically did not see many species in the area on the eastern edge of the property (cleared in 2005) or the volunteer grove (cleared and replanted starting in 2001).

As the native plants and shrubs in the volunteer grove were multiplying and growing over time, and as we were beginning to replant native shrubs on the eastern edge of the park, we wanted to know if birds would return to restored areas in greater numbers, especially if we could replace barren areas with larger shrubs for replanting.

As shown on the project map (Exhibit A), we assigned the area of the proposed CW project area Point 2 and Volunteer Grove Point 4 (because it is the last place we visit on our walks.) Point 3, was assigned to a place which takes into account the south and west sides of the pond. Point 1, a control, was assigned to the pathway entrance to the park

### **Baseline Survey**

On May 15, 2008, Donald Dann of the Bird Conservation Network led a bird walk around Foley's Pond. Results from this survey, as well as past years' data, were entered on the BCN e-bird online listing to become part of ongoing Chicago Wilderness monitoring initiatives.

### **Work Begins**

As shown on the attached project map, in the area keyed "Migrant Bird Shrub Project," volunteers and Parks Crews had already removed woody invasives and replanted small native shrubs starting in 2005. In May 2008, with funding from the Chicago Wilderness Small Grant Fund, the Park District took delivery of 36 large shrubs and 18 trees for spring planting in this area. Prior to planting, Park District staff monitored for invasives and provided control as needed.

We were assisted in planting on May 9, 2008 by natural areas volunteers and Parks Crews. Then, in October 2008, we arranged several workdays which included neighbors of the park, natural areas volunteers, volunteers from the Circle K service club of Lake Forest College and a group of volunteers from the Motorola Foundation. More than 100 large shrubs were put in the ground by October 13. We thank David Painter, VSN steward at Chicago's "Magic Hedge," for his guidance in plant selection and layout (Exhibit C).

The new landscaping was part of a larger capital project which improved the existing walking path currently used by birders to navigate around the pond and provided a fishing/observation platform at the pond's edge. This work was guided by our awareness of sensitive bird habitat areas as shown on the Site Plan (Exhibit B).

### **First Year Survey**

Donald Dann repeated the bird walk on May 12, 2009, after completion of the shrub border planting. The data for 2008 and 2009 were compiled as a four point survey corresponding to our two restoration areas and two control (non-restored) areas.

Volunteers and park district staff received training in the methodology from the Bird Conservation Network/Chicago Audubon.

## Foley's Pond Species Counts by Points 1-4 2008 and 2009

### POINT 1 (Control)

May 2008

Red-bellied woodpecker

Blue Jay

White-throated sparrow

Northern Cardinal

Total Species: 4

WR: .000

May 2009

American Robin

Brown-headed cowbird

Total Species: 2

WR: .000

### POINT 2 (CW Project Area)

May 2008

Canada Goose

Wood Duck

Double-crested Cormorant

Green Heron

Belter Kingfisher

Downy Woodpecker

Hairy Woodpecker

Least Flycatcher

Barn Swallow

White-breasted Nuthatch

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Cedar Waxwing

Yellow Warbler

Chestnut-sided Warbler

American Redstart

Red-winged Blackbird

Common Yellow-throat

Northern Cardinal

Red-Winged Blackbird

Common Grackle

Total Species: 16

WR: .188

May 2009

Canada Goose

Green Heron

Spotted Sandpiper

Chimney Swift

Belted Kingfisher

Downy Woodpecker

Northern Rough-winged Swallow

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Swainson's Thrush

Gray Catbird

Yellow Warbler

Chestnut-sided Warbler

Magnolia Warbler

Black-throated Green Warbler

American Redstart

Northern Waterthrush

Total Species: 21

WR: .333

### Point 3 (Control)

May 2008

Black-capped Chickadee

Wood Thrush

American Robin

Palm Warbler

Ovenbird

Northern Waterthrush

Common Yellowthroat

Canada Warbler

Baltimore Oriole

American Goldfinch

Swamp Sparrow

Baltimore Oriole

Total Species: 10

WR: .500

May 2009

Red-Bellied Woodpecker

Least Flycatcher

Blue-headed Vireo

Blue Jay

Black-capped Chickadee

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Bay-breasted Warbler

Black-and-white Warbler

Common Yellowthroat

Lincoln's Sparrow

Total Species: 12

WR: .333

**POINT 4 (Volunteer Grove)**

**May 2008**

**Magnolia Warbler**

**Black-and-white Warbler**

**Wilson's Warbler**

**Black-and-white Warbler**

**Common Yellowthroat**

**Wilson's Warbler**

**Lincoln's Sparrow**

**Baltimore Oriole**

**American Goldfinch**

**Species Total: 3**

**WR: 1.00**

**May 2009**

**Yellow Warbler**

**Chestnut-sided Warbler**

**Black-throated Green Warbler**

**Species Total: 9**

**WR: .666**

**Exhibit A: Project Map**

## **Results**

### **Control (Points 1 and 3)**

Our expectations about control Points 1 and 3 were borne out by the 2008/2009 results. Point 1, the entryway to the park bordered by residences, was consistent with our expectations... netting a zero WR in both years. Birds there were few and of non-conservative species.

Point 3, with WR of .500 and .333 for 2008 and 2009 respectively, confirmed our sense that the south and west edges of the park (Point 3) (adjacent to remnant oak woods and the Sunset Valley Golf Course) is a "hot spot" for conservative species.

### **Test (Points 2 and 4)**

Interestingly, Volunteer Grove (Point 4), our most mature restoration area, enjoyed a dramatic increase in the number of species we sighted (from 3 to 9) and also the birds we saw were mostly conservative (WR of 1.00 in 2008 and .666 in 2009). This could indicate that conservative birds are, indeed, starting to make use of the maturing shrubs and trees in Volunteer Grove—good news indeed. If so, it has been six years (2002 to 2008) in the making.

Our CW Project Area (Point 2), also saw an increase in total number of species and WR, from 16/.188 in 2008 to 21/.333 in 2009. Perhaps with the help of the CW grant funds, the larger trees and shrubs we were able to plant in the Shrub Habitat area will see better returns in fewer years than in the Volunteer Grove. One offsetting factor may be the proximity of the grove to the pond, whereas the shrub project is more "inland."

### **Management Implications**

Obviously, we need more longevity in our longitudinal study. We will continue to conduct and report our annual Foley's Pond bird survey results on line with the Bird Conservation Network. The results will guide our restoration efforts (perhaps suggesting that we stay in proximity to the water) and hopefully aid our ability to fund the purchase of larger specimens of shrubs and trees.

As a side note, we also observed that leaving cut piles of buckthorn shrubs (as long as they are not heavy with fruit) is one bird-friendly way to "dispose" of woody material. In the course of buckthorn eradication, we also used chemical girdling to kill tall buckthorn trees and leave them standing for birds. Both of these methods support insects for birds to



forage on, and the brush piles are popular places for birds to shelter while the understory re-establishes.

### **Educational Benefits**

Foley's Pond remains a natural treasure in an urban setting. As we share the news about our research and restoration activities there, we are reaching a new and varied audience about the importance of even tiny parcels of habitat. Neighbor meetings and mailings regarding Foley's Pond upgrades were an opportunity to discuss the importance of "backyard" habitat for migratory and resident birds. Our two workdays with the Motorola Foundation brought in about 100 volunteers who happened to be not only from the Chicago area, but from across the nation. Articles in District publications extended our message to a wider population (Exhibit D).

### **Exhibit B:**

**Conceptual Site Plan Showing Shrub Planting Area and Sensitive Bird Habitat Areas**  
Park District of Highland Park, Planning Department

### **Exhibit C:**

**Foley's Pond Shrub Border for Migratory Birds**  
**Plant List 2008/2009**

#### **Spring 2008**

*Celtis Occidentalis* Hackberry(9) 1.25

*Quercus Rubra* Red Oak (9) 2.25 to 2.5

*Cornus alternifolia* Pagoda Dogwood(13) 6 foot

*Corylus americana* American Filbert (18) 4 foot

#### **Fall 2008**

*Sambucus canadensis* Elderberry(18) 5 gal

*Prunus americana* American Plum(18) 5 gal to 4 foot

*Aronia melanocarpa* Black Chokeberry(18) 4 foot

*Hammamelis virginiana* Witchhazel (18) 4 foot

*Viburnum lentago* Nannyberry(18) 7 foot

*Viburnum prunifolium* Blackhaw Viburnum 5 foot

#### **Spring 2009**

*Quercus rubra* Red Oak (1) 2.5"

*Quercus rubra* Red Oak (3) 2.25

*Cornus alternifolia* Pagoda Dogwood (5) 4 foot

Total Installed: 169

### **Exhibit D: Sample Mailings**

## Appendix C

### **Illinois Conservation Congress**

October 24 – 25, 2009

Over 130 representatives of a wide-cross section of organizations and interests attended the 2009 Conservation Congress, which was held at the Department of Natural Resources headquarters in Springfield.

Only three bird organizations (if you don't count Ducks Unlimited and orgs dedicated to hunting pheasants and quail) were represented: The Illinois Raptor Center, Decatur Audubon and Illinois Audubon.

In his opening remarks, IDNR Director, Marc Miller, explained that reviving constituent input into the Department by bringing back Conservation Congress was one of his top priorities after being appointed by Governor Quinn to the top job at IDNR in January 2009. Governor Quinn made a surprise visit on the second day, gave a very eco-supportive presentation, and was very happily glad handing as many attendees as he could.

Two main factors—limited time and scant resources – led to the new structure of this year's Congress. Unlike Congresses past, there was no delegate credentialing or regional caucuses.

Constituents worked with committees of the Department's Natural Resources Advisory Board to forge a consensus in three focus areas vital to the future of the Department: Youth Recruitment and Retention, Public Access to Private Lands, and Conservation Funding. These committees met throughout the spring and summer at locations across the State. Constituents were also encouraged to participate in an online survey as well as submit written comments to the Board.

At the beginning of the Congress, the results of the committee meetings and an Internet survey completed by 6,075 individuals were presented to the representatives in attendance. (Final Committee reports can be found at: <http://www.dnr.state.il.us/nrab/cc.htm>).

Everyone then moved into small breakout groups of 10 to 12 participants to further distill, clarify and add to the ideas and goals of each focus

area. The facilitators analyzed the results of the breakout sessions and presented a list of the top issues of concern to the entire Congress. Each individual participant was then given the opportunity to cast votes for the final recommendations.

Listed below are the top three issues for each focus area.

### **PUBLIC ACCESS**

Restore liability protection for all recreational uses when allowed by private landowners, through legislation. (Lenore Beyer-Clow announced that Openlands would take the legislative lead on this issue.) (58 votes)

Develop a new program within IDNR through establishment of a dedicated funding source such a stamp or other special fee to advocate and research new methods to expand access on private and public lands including incentives for private land owners. (37 votes)

More land acquisition. (21 votes)

### **YOUTH**

Update the Environmental Literacy Plan to include outdoor components that result in youth recruitment and retention. (51 votes)

With partners, develop mentoring programs that will pass on to younger generations safe and ethical outdoor traditions. (25 votes)

Educate youth in schools and through informal programs with non-governmental organizations on conservation issues and natural resources; Market, promote and advertise youth programs and activities. (19 votes)

### **CONSERVATION FUNDING**

Develop a Master Plan for a long-term funding source through expanded partnerships. (75 votes)

Implement a long-term dedicated funding source according to the Master Plan. (55 votes)

Immediately pass SB1846 and quickly implement new fees and fee increases through Administrative Rule, accommodating those who can't afford to pay. The new fees likely will include day and annual parking use fees (probably \$5 per day and \$25 per year for Illinois residents) which will affect bird watchers. (54 votes)

## **FINAL CONCLUSIONS**

The broad consensus of the group – and IDNR staff – is that Conservation Politics as Usual in Illinois **MUST CHANGE**. User and environmental groups must become active political players in order to influence the state legislature to create and maintain a dedicated funding source. By that, I mean maintain a steady flow of funds that cannot be swept out of the IDNR's budget and used to fill a hole elsewhere in the state's overall budget.

The Trust for Public Lands is working on an analysis of the existing structure of Parks for Parks, which might be the organizing group that will bring a much wider range of user groups together to lobby for conservation funding under a new action plan. New allies may include health organizations that recognize the health benefits of outdoor activities; faith-based organizations; artistic and cultural groups; foundations; endowments; local governments; commercial enterprises; corporate funders.

The goal will require a multi-year effort. Minnesota is on its 9<sup>th</sup> year of lobbying for a similar goal, but like Illinois, conservation funding is achievable in that state. Even non-profit organizations can educate and energize their members to influence state legislators without violating their lobby limits under state law.

Birders must take part in this process and out compete with all other user groups or consumptive uses will win the battle over access to and protection of Illinois' scant 500,000 of state-owned lands will be jeopardized.

User conflicts are on the rise and hunter/angler groups have a lot of sway with politicians and the INDR because they contribute a lot to the INDR's budget through fees. Birders probably will have to pay a day use fee in the very near future, but it will be a small price to pay to preserve state parks and to earn a top spot at the table.

Conservation Congress likely will meet more often (time frame was every three years) and more flexibly in the future.

As Marc Miller told the assembled crowd: "Constituents can't come and tell the IDNR what to do and then go home and expect it to happen. Everyone has to remain active and involved."

BCN and its member groups need to get involved and remain involved.

