



Bird Conservation Network

BCN Quarterly Meeting Minutes
Saturday, April 10, 2010, 12 to 3 PM
Camp Sagawau, FPD of Cook County

Attendees: Chris Van Wassenhove, Bobbi Asher, Carolyn Marsh, CAS, Annette Prince, Mary Lou Mellon, CBCM; Sigrid Schmidt, Nancy Tikalski, Chris Williamson COS; Glenn Gabanski, Bob Fisher, DBC; Lloyd Davidson, ENSBC; Joan Bruchman, IOS; Valerie Lewis, Jean Sodemann, Lake-Cook; Diane Rosenberg, Lake County; Judy Pollock, Lee Ramsey, NAS-CW; Donnie Dann, TNC; Lee Witkowski, Will County, Dennis DeCoursey. guest, Camp Sagawau. In addition Scott Beckerman and John Hartman from the U.S. Dept of Agriculture and have been working on the gull nuisance species problem for the City of Chicago were guest speakers

The meeting was called to order by President Joan Bruchman at 12:01pm. A quorum was established with 19 representatives from 11 member organizations. Introductions were made. The Secretary's post continues unfilled. Donnie Dann volunteered to take minutes.

Administrative:

The **minutes** of the Saturday, January 9, 2010, quarterly meeting were accepted as written. They are posted on the website at www.BCNbirds.org.

Treasurer's report: Glenn Gabanski. As of 4/10/10 BCN has \$1,232.91 in the checking account and \$3,000 in a CD maturing on 9/8/10. Taking into account known amounts payable and receivable we have a funds balance of \$3,815.38 and an estimated \$1,025.61 to spend to avoid paying corporate income taxes in 2010.

In March BCN received three donations: \$25 from Donnie Dann (an honorarium paid him for giving a talk at Birding America), \$100 from the Lake-Cook Chapter of the Illinois Audubon Society, and \$500 from Jeff and Arlene Koziol. BCN is grateful for these donations and thanks the individuals and the organization for their generous support.

Since the last Quarterly Meeting the Executive Committee authorized payments of \$250 to Eric Secker for designing the Birds of Concern brochure and \$100 to the Illinois Birder's Forum for a year's advertising on its website. To date ads have announced the 2010 Bird Monitoring Workshops and BCN's Give Back to Birds Day.

In 2010 BCN has spent \$909.61 of the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund Grant (IWPF) grant. These funds along with \$274.05 from 2009 will be reimbursed once the final project reports are filed with the IDNR.

Membership: All but one organization, Save the Dunes Conservation fund, paid their 2010 dues by the March 31 deadline. Glenn will follow up with this organization. Our bylaws state that organizations and individuals have until June 30 to pay before losing voting rights.

Matthew Cvetas' application for membership was voted on and he was unanimously accepted as an individual member. BCN's membership now stands at 19 organizations and 4 individual members.

Guest Speaker

Scott Beckerman of the USDA described his 3 years of work (in partnership with Chicago's Dept of Environment) on arresting the rapid growth of the population of Ring-billed Gulls. BBS data shows a 17%/yr population growth. His colleague, John Hartman is project coordinator at the field level. Scott pointed out how gulls are generalist species and are well adapted to the human environment. 75% of banded gulls are recaptured within 40km of their nest colony, so they tend to remain near their place of birth. "Hatch here – stay here". USDA's/DOE's mission has been to mitigate conflicts with gulls and people. For example the City spends 30k per year just to keep Millennium Park's Bean clean. More gulls strike planes than any other species. Standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency in measuring E. coli bacteria determine when swim bans are imposed. No distinction is made between types of E. coli. and it's unknown whether E. coli from birds pose a threat to human health. Is human garbage the cause or the partial cause? Gulls can be kept off landfills but it's labor and time intensive. They are working on predictive models to tell in advance when swim bans will be imposed. In 2004 there were 200 swim bans at an estimated cost of \$19 million lost because of closures. He explained there are many sources of fecal coliform, far more than just gulls. Chris Williamson asked is it not true that the EPA is modeling this problem incorrectly? Scott didn't deny this. Scott will email Dr. Whitman's report on the E. coli study done at 63rd Street Beach to Joan. When received, Joan will forward to ExComm and all other interested parties.

There are 4600 nests at Dime Pier near Navy Pier and 22,000 nests in Calumet. More garbage bins have been placed and are cleaned more often to deter unintentional feeding. Goals are to limit increases in gull populations and to attain a decline in swim bans. There is no killing of adult birds; only oiling of new eggs. Twenty percent of eggs, the control portion, are not oiled. The slight increase in oiling resulted in great reduction in hatch year birds' use of beaches. Eighteen of 19 beaches experienced fewer gulls in '09 than '08 and increases are being halted. Immigration from Indiana is not a big factor.

The Chicago Park District is expected to soon release a report on their border-collie program and concern was expressed about conflicts with shorebirds. Joan and Chris will meet with CPD person in charge of the border-collie program to discuss the threat this program poses to shorebirds.

Projects/Initiatives

President Joan and Vice-President Mary Lou described Illinois House Resolution 0884, the purpose of which is to encourage municipalities and State agencies to adopt suitable outdoor lighting practices, using light only when needed, at levels needed. The resolution passed the State House unanimously. It was sponsored by the Illinois Coalition for Responsible Outdoor Lighting (ICROL), whose mission is to deter unnecessary lighting for the benefit of people, wildlife and the environment in general. It's a logical extension of Chicago's Lights Out program. Lights can cause bird fatalities and interfere with migration patterns. It was pointed out that HR 0884 is a resolution and not a bill so it doesn't have the force of law.

Donnie Dann was asked to explain Congressman Mike Quigley's recently introduced HR 4797 in the U. S. House of Representatives. Its language mirrors that of the bill that Quigley successfully had enacted when he was a Cook County Commissioner. It provides for all newly constructed Federal buildings to be built to be "bird friendly," the criteria for which the legislation describes. Dann called his Congressman, Mark Kirk, who immediately signed on as a co-sponsor. All reps were asked to call their Congress person to co-sponsor this bill.

Dann was also asked if there is anything new regarding the Wind Turbine Guidelines Advisory Committee and their task to formulate guidelines for siting and operation of wind turbines that could be agreed upon by industry and the environmental members of this Committee. The Committee is concluding the sixth draft of a document. A discussion ensued about the disproportionate (favoring industry) make-up of the Committee, the fact that the guidelines are voluntary, and the need for nearby transmission lines. Currently, for wind turbines in Illinois there are no guidelines or permitting, etc. Post meeting Dann learned that the work group has released the most recent version of the Committee's recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior. It includes a cover memo explaining the changes from the previous draft. Draft v6.1 is available on the Committee website, on the right-hand side of the page in the "Important Documents" box:

http://www.fws.gov/habitatconservation/windpower/wind_turbine_advisory_committee.html

Bob Fisher raised the issue of gravel mining in forest preserves, specifically at Brunner Forest Preserve along Fox River in Kane County. The Kane County Board is being pressed to give a private company the right to mine gravel on this property. Runoff into

Fox could be a problem. The overarching issue is should a private company be allowed to dig a hole and mine gravel in a Forest Preserve? It would clearly be a bad precedent.

Annette Prince attended the ICROL symposium (mentioned above). She described it as very informative and well-organized. Annette explained that lights at night are a cultural habitat, not a safety issue. Excessive night lighting is harmful to all animals including humans, who have evolved to have dark/light cycles. Outdoor lights are terribly inefficient.

Diane Rosenberg gave an updated report on the platforms placed for nesting Great Blue Herons at Almond Marsh. One was built last year; it was used by a pair and 5 young were fledged. This winter 10 more platforms were built by volunteers over 2 days. As of the Monday before this meeting, 8 of the 11 are occupied. The unoccupied platforms are the ones that were placed experimentally on the western end of the marsh. Last year's platform is listing because of ice damage. They plan to drill holes around the new platforms to prevent this next year.

Judy Pollock gave an update on the problem of protecting Montrose as the fireworks on July 4th were supposed to be at the Waveland clock area, but Bob Fisher says the very latest is that the fireworks barge will be off Foster Beach, the worst possible place, as thousands may try to use Montrose and the fishhook pier as the best viewing area. Enforcement is key. Judy will ask the Mayor's Nature and Wildlife committee at their early May meeting to urge strong enforcement with sizable uniformed police to surround Montrose. Birders as volunteer guards were also considered.

A discussion took place of the expansion of Rte 53 and 120 in Lake County. At present nothing has been concluded.

Carolyn Marsh gave an update on Indian Ridge Marsh restoration, on which BCN had previously sent a letter. Walter Marcisz worked with Carolyn on recommendations to the City, the Army Corps of Engineers and the contractor Tetra-tech regarding trail location to minimize disturbance to the Black-crowned Night-Heron colony. CPD has scheduled a walkthrough. Interested parties will meet at IRM on Wednesday, May 19, 2010, to discuss the design of the project pre-construction. Carolyn and Walter plan to be present during this walk to make further recommendations on trail placement to protect the Black-crowned Night-Heron nests.

Judy Pollock explained how she has been urging the Chicago Park District to have a meeting with birders to better describe their restoration efforts and reasons for what they're doing.

Glenn Gabanski and Judy told of their success in implementing a grant from the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund (part of the IDNR), which will reimburse BCN up to \$1200 for the funds we've expended. As previously reported, BCN has used the funds to purchase GPS units for use by monitors in establishing points. This year monitors are being asked to enter habitat descriptions for their points as well as birds seen.

Lee Ramsey reported on 3 monitors' workshops this year, in McHenry County, Chicago, and Gibson Woods in Hammond. Attendance was excellent and the entire monitoring/recruiting effort seems to be doing better than ever. More mentors are needed.

Judy reported that Audubon, Chicago Region will conduct a limited number of blitzes this year. They want to do a migrant blitz in Palos, possibly at Sagawau with the assistance of Dennis DeCoursey, who may have some old records that could be of help. Possibly there will be another blitz site in the breeding season.

Joan reminded all of the April 24th Give Back to the Birds Day at Bartel Grasslands. Volunteers are still needed.

The meeting was adjourned at 3pm.

The next meeting will be Saturday, July 17, 2010, at a location to be announced.

Respectfully submitted,

Donnie Dann,

Acting Secretary